



Key initiatives for Entertainment Industry announced in Interim Budget 2019-20

- **Union Finance Minister** Shri Piyush Goyal today announced key initiatives taken by the Government in the films sector in the Interim Budget 2019-20.
- **Hailing the entertainment industry** as a major employment generator, he declared that the provision of single window clearance system for ease of shooting films, hitherto available only to foreigners, will now be made available to Indian filmmakers as well. The regulatory provisions will rely more on self-regulation.
- **He also announced** that the Government will introduce anti-camcording provisions in the Cinematograph Act to control the menace of piracy.
- **The entertainment industry** has appreciated the announcement of single window clearance system as a significant step with a potential to play a role in boosting tourism, while stating that anti-camcording measures will assist in the industry's growth. The industry also expressed its delight at the acknowledgement by the Finance Minister of its contribution towards employment generation.
- **To provide an assured income** support to small and marginal farmers Govt. is launching Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (P.M. Kissan) Budgetary allocation of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Ministry has been raised by around 2.5 times

Government decides to create a separate Department of Fisheries

- **Agriculture continues** to be the main driver of the rural economy. Our hard-working farmers, supported by pro-farmer policies of our Government in the past four and half years, have produced agriculture commodities in record quantities. Declining prices of agricultural commodities in the international market and fall in food inflation in India since 2017-18, relative to non-food sector, have however, reduced the returns from farming.
- **Small and fragmented** land holding on account of repeated divisions has also contributed in decline in the income of the farmer family. Hence, there is a need for providing structured income support to the poor land-holder farmer families in the country for procuring inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, equipment, labour etc. and to meet other needs. Such support will help them in avoiding indebtedness as well and falling into clutches of money lenders.
- **To provide an assured** income support to the small and marginal farmers, Government is launching a historic programme namely "Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)".
- **Under this programme**, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of Rs 6,000 per year. This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal installments of Rs 2,000 each.
- **This programme will** be funded by Government of India. Around 12 crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit from this. The programme would be made effective from 1st December 2018 and the first installment for the period upto 31st March 2019 would be paid during this year itself. This programme will entail an annual expenditure of Rs 75,000 crore.
- **The Budgetary allocation** of the Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Ministry has been raised by around 2.5 times from Rs 58,358 crore in 2018-19 to Rs 1,41,174.37 crore in 2019-20.
- **Comparing five year** period, during UPA government (2009-14), it was Rs 1,21,082 crore and during Modi government (2014-19), it is an increase of 74.5% to Rs 2,11,694 crore.
- **In fact, the budgetary** allocation of Rs 1,41,174.37 crore in 2019-20 is 16.6% more than Rs 1,21,082 crore during UPA (2009-14).

Micro Irrigation Fund – Rs 5000 crore

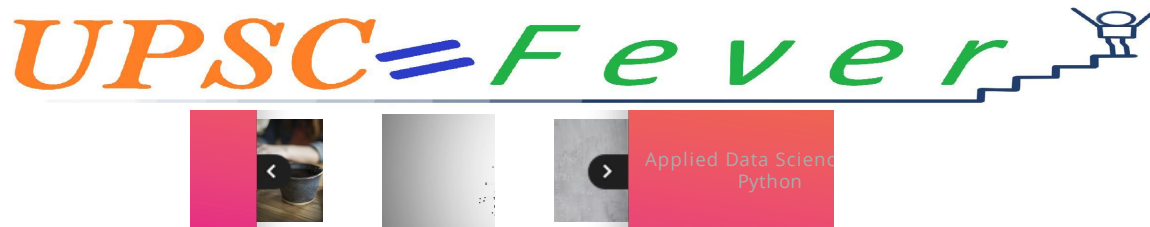
- **Dairy Processing & Infrastructure** Development Fund (DIDF) – Rs 10,881 crore Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund – Rs 2000 crore Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) – Rs 7522.48 crore Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) – Rs 2477.52 crore
- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission has been** started for the first time in the country by Modi Government to promote the country's cattle and buffaloes, to preserve their genetic resources in scientific and holistic form and for continuous growth in the productivity of Indian bovine. Considering its importance, Rs 250 crore allocations for it in Budget 2018-19 have been raised to Rs 750 crore. The "Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog" has been established to upscale sustainable genetic up-gradation of cow resources and to enhance production and productivity of cows. The Aayog will also look after effective implementation of laws and welfare schemes for cows. Besides advising Gaushala and gausadan involved in protecting cows, the body will also help in coordination between livestock farmers and cooperatives, FPOs, dairy entrepreneurs etc.
- **India is the second largest fish** producing nation in the world accounting for 6.3% of global production. The fisheries sector contributes 1% to GDP and provides livelihood to about 1.45 crore people at the primary level. The sector registered an average annual growth of more than 7% in recent years and the total production during 2017-18 was 12.61 million tonnes. During 2017-18, the revenue from exports was estimated at Rs 45,106.89 crores, which shows an average annual growth rate of approximately 11.31% in recent years. To provide sustained and focused attention towards development of this sector, Government has decided to create a separate Department of Fisheries.
- **Through Kisan Credit Card**, the government provides institutional credit at cheap rates to farmers. This not only helps in increasing agricultural production but also productivity. In the interest subvention scheme, farmers are given short-term loan up to Rs 3 lakh per annum by banks on timely payment of loan at the rate of 4%. In the last Budget, our Government announced the facility of extension of Kisan Credit Card scheme (KCC) to Animal Husbandry and Fisheries farmers. 2% interest subvention to the farmers pursuing the activities of animal husbandry and fisheries, who avail loan through Kisan Credit Card will be provided. Further, in case of timely repayment of loan, they will also get an additional 3% interest subvention.
- **Presently, the crop loans** are rescheduled for such affected farmers and they get benefit of interest subvention of 2% only for the first year of the rescheduled loan. Now, all farmers affected by severe natural calamities, where assistance is provided from National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF), will be provided the benefit of interest subvention of 2% and prompt repayment incentive of 3% for the entire period of rescheduling of their loans. To ensure provision of easy and concessional credit and to bring all farmers under KCC fold, Government has decided to initiate a comprehensive drive with a simplified application form.

BUDGET SUMMARY WITH MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- **Interim Budget 2019-20** was presented in Parliament today by the Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs, Railways & Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal. Besides having a major Scheme for the farmers, it provides tax sops and sets the Developmental Agenda for the years to come.
- **A New Deal for 12 Crore Small** and Marginal farmers with direct income support, a path breaking Pension initiative for 10 Crore unorganized sector workers, exempting income up to Rs 5 lakhs from Income Tax, reforms in stamp duty, highest ever budgetary allocation of Rs 3 lakh crore for Defence, record allocation of funds at Rs 58,166 crore for North Eastern Areas, a new AIIMS for Haryana, single window clearance for Indian film makers at par with foreigners and higher budgetary allocations for Education, Health, Infrastructure and for the welfare of weaker sections including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, a Separate Department of Fisheries for welfare of 1.5 crore fisherman are some of the major highlights of the Interim Budget 2019- 20.
- **Major Schemes** New Scheme- namely "Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)" to extend direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year to farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares is announced.
- **While presenting the Interim Budget** 2019-20, the Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs, Railways & Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal said that "our Government is launching a historic programme PM-KISAN with an outlay of Rs.75,000 crore for the FY 2019-20 and Rs.20,000 crore in the Revised Estimates of FY 2018-19".
- **Under this Government of India** funded Scheme, Rs.2,000 each will be transferred to the bank accounts of around 12 crore Small and Marginal farmer families, in three equal installments. This programme would be made effective from 1st December 2018 and the first installment for the period upto 31st March 2019 would be paid during this year itself, Shri Piyush Goyal said.
- **To provide sustained and focused** attention towards development of Fisheries, the Government has decided to create a separate Department of Fisheries. Finance Minister said that through the measure, the Government wants to promote further growth over 7% to promote livelihood of about 1.45 crore people dependent on the sector.

- **The Finance Minister announced** 2% interest subvention to the farmers pursuing the activities of animal husbandry and fisheries, who avail loan through Kisan Credit Card. Further, in case of timely repayment of loan, they will also get an additional 3% interest subvention.
- **Allocation of Rs.750 crore for** Rashtriya Gokul Mission has been announced for the current year itself. Setting up of "Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog" to upscale sustainable genetic upgradation of cow resources and to enhance production and productivity of cows has also been announced. The Aayog will also look after effective implementation of laws and welfare schemes for cow.
- **To provide pensionary benefits** to at least 10 crore labourers and workers in the unorganised sector a new Scheme called 'Pradhan Mantri Shram-Yogi Maandhan' is announced. The Finance Minister said that within next five years it would be one of the largest pension schemes of the world. A sum of Rs.500 crore has been allocated for the Scheme. Additional funds will be provided as needed, Shri Goyal added. The scheme will also be implemented from the current year, he said.
- **Tax Benefits Individual taxpayers having taxable** annual income up to Rs.5 lakhs will not be required to pay any income tax. The Finance Minister said that persons having gross income up to Rs.
- **6.50lakhs are not required to pay** any income tax if they make investments in provident funds, specified savings and insurance etc. Additional deductions such as interest on home loan up to Rs. 2 lakh, interest on education loans, National Pension Scheme contributions, medical insurance and medical expenditure on senior citizens etc, are also provided for in the Interim Budget 2019-20. Thus tax benefit of Rs. 18,500 crore is proposed to be provided to an estimated 3 crore middle class and small taxpayers comprising self employed, small business, small traders, salary earners, pensioners and senior citizens. For salaried persons, Standard Deduction is being raised from the current Rs.40,000 to Rs.50,000. This will provide additional tax benefit of Rs. 4,700 crore to more than 3 crore salary earners and pensioners.
- **Exemption on levy of income tax on notional** rent on a second self-occupied house is also now proposed. Currently, income tax on notional rent is payable if one has more than one self-occupied house. TDS threshold on interest earned on bank/post office deposits is being raised from Rs. 10,000 to Rs.40,000. TDS threshold for deduction of tax on rent is proposed to be increased from Rs. 1,80,000 to Rs.2,40,000 for providing relief to small taxpayers.
- **The Finance Minister** says that the Government wants the GST burden on home buyers to be reduced and accordingly the GST Council was moved to appoint a Group of Ministers to examine and make recommendations in this regard at the earliest. Shri Goyal said that soon, businesses comprising over 90% of GST payers will be allowed to file quarterly return.
- **Inflation The Finance Minister** said that the Government has been successful in bringing down average inflation to 4.6% over last five years, which is lower than the inflation during the tenure of any other Government. In fact Inflation in December 2018 was down to 2.19% only. Shri Goyal said if we had not controlled inflation, our families would have been spending around 35- 40% more today on basic necessities such as food, travel, consumer durables, housing etc. The average rate of inflation during previous five years 2009-2014 was a backbreaking 10.1%, he pointed out.
- **Fiscal Deficit** The fiscal deficit has been brought down to 3.4% in 2018-19 RE from the high of almost 6% seven years ago, the Finance Minister mentioned. He said, the Current Account Deficit (CAD), against a high of 5.6% six years ago, is likely to be only 2.5% of GDP this year. "We contained the fiscal deficit notwithstanding the Finance Commission's recommendations increasing the share of the States from 32% to 42% in central taxes, which we accepted in the true spirit of cooperative federalism, thereby transferring significantly higher amounts to the States", Shri Goyal said.
- **Growth and FDI** The Finance Minister Shri Piyush Goyal stated that a stage for high growth in decades to come, has now been set, after a wave of next generation path breaking structural reforms over the last five years, including introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and other taxation reforms.
- **The country witnessed** its best phase of macro-economic stability during the last five years. "We are the fastest growing major economy in the world with an annual average GDP growth during last five years higher than the growth achieved by any Government since economic reforms began in 1991. From being the 11th largest economy in the world in 2013-14, we are today the 6th largest in the world", the Finance Minister asserted in his Opening Remarks of his Budget speech.
- **Shri Goyal** said that due to such a stable and predictable regulatory regime, growing economy and strong fundamentals, India could attract massive amount of as much as \$239 billion of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) during the last 5 years, when most of the FDI was allowed to come in through the automatic route.
- **Enhanced allocations for major Schemes** Announcing an allocation of Rs.60,000 crores for MGNREGA for Budget Estimates 2019-20, the Finance Minister said that additional allocations will be made, if required.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)** is being allocated Rs.19,000 crore in BE 2019-20 as against Rs.15,500 crore in RE 2018-19. During the period 2014-18, a total number of 1.53 crore houses have been built under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, he announced.
- **By March, 2019, all households** will be provided with electricity connection. Till now, 143 crore LED bulbs have been provided in a mission mode which has resulted in saving of Rs.50,000 crore for the poor and middle class.
- **He said through the world's** largest healthcare programme, Ayushman Bharat, to provide medical treatment to nearly 50 crore people in the country, around 10 lakh patients have already benefited through free treatment for medical treatment which would have otherwise cost them Rs. 3,000 crore. Lakhs of poor and middle class people are also benefiting from reduction in the prices of essential medicines, cardiac stents and knee implants, and availability of medicines at affordable prices through Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras, the Finance Minister added.
- **Shri Goyal also said that 14** of the 21 AIIMS operating or being established in the country presently have been announced since 2014. He also announced setting up of a new - the 22nd AIIMS in Haryana.
- **Allocation for Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)** is being increased from Rs.23,357 crore in RE 2018-19 to Rs.27,584 crore in BE 2019-20.

- **A substantial increase is proposed in the allocation** for welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The allocation of Rs.56,619 crore made in BE of 2018-19 for Scheduled Caste, further increased to Rs.62,474 crore in RE is proposed to be enhanced to Rs.76,801 crore in BE for 2019-20, an increase of 35.6% over BE of 2018-19. For the Scheduled Tribes also,
- **proposed allocation in 2019-20 BE** is Rs.50,086 crore as against Rs.39,135 crore in BE 2018-19, an increase of 28%.
- **The Finance Minister said that a** Welfare Development Board to frame special strategies for the benefit of the hard-to-reach De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic communities will be set up under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. He said that a Committee under NITI Aayog will also be set up to complete the task of identifying De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic communities not yet formally classified.
- **Shri Goyal said under the Ujjwala** Yojana aiming delivery of 8 crore free LPG connections, more than 6 crore connections have already been given and the remaining will get free gas connections by next year.
- **The Finance Minister announced that** a National Artificial Intelligence Portal will also be developed soon as a part of the National Programme on 'Artificial Intelligence'.
- **The Department of Industrial Policy** and Promotion will now be renamed as the Department for Promotion of Industries and Internal Trade.
- **The Finance Minister stated that the** Government e-Marketplace (GeM), created by the present Government two years ago, resulted in average savings of 25-28% and the platform will now be extended to all CPSEs. Transactions of over Rs. 17,500 crore have taken place so far.
- **The Finance Minister announced that** for the first time, the country's Defence Budget will be of over Rs.3 lakh crore.
- **The Finance Minister, Shri Piyush Goyal** pointed-out that domestic air traffic passengers have doubled during the last five years, leading to large number of jobs also being created. The number of operational airports has crossed 100 with the commissioning of the Pakyong airport in Sikkim. Arunachal Pradesh came on the air map recently and Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram have come on India's rail map for the first time.
- **Capital support from the budget for Indian Railways** is proposed at Rs.64,587 crore in 2019-20 (BE). The Railways' overall capital expenditure programme is of Rs. 1,58,658 crore. The Finance Minister, who is also holding the portfolio of Railway Ministry, announced that the Operating Ratio is expected to improve from 98.4% in 2017-18 to 96.2% in 2018-19 (RE) and further to 95% in 2019-20 (BE).
- **India's installed solar generation capacity has** grown over ten times in last five years. Stating this, Shri Goyal said that "our commitment to promote renewable energy is reflected in setting up the International Solar Alliance, the first treaty based international inter-governmental organisation headquartered in India. This sector is now creating lakhs of new age jobs, he added.
- **The Finance Minister announced that in Entertainment industry**, which is a major employment generator, regulatory provisions will now rely more on self-declarations. To promote entertainment industry, the Single window clearance for ease of shooting films, now available only to foreigners, will also be made available to Indian filmmakers. "We will also introduce anti-camcording provisions in the Cinematograph Act to control the menace of piracy", he said.
- **Saying that "We are poised to become a Five Trillion Dollar Economy** in the next five years and aspire to become a Ten Trillion Dollar Economy in the next 8 years thereafter", Shri Piyush Goyal said that there has been a Growth of 18% in Direct Tax Collections in 2017-18 and
- **increase in tax base by as many as 1.06 crore people filing** income tax returns for the first time in FY 2017-18, mainly on account of demonetization.
- **Shri Goyal said that he is proposing, through the Finance Bill**, necessary amendments to levy Stamp duties on one instrument relating to one transaction and get collected at one place through the Stock Exchanges. The duty so collected will be shared with the State Governments seamlessly on the basis of domicile of buying client, he said.
- **In all the total expenditure is to increase from Rs.24,57,235 crore** in 2018-19 RE to Rs.27,84,200 crore in 2019-20 BE. A rise of Rs.3,26,965 crore or approximately 13.30%. This reflects a high increase considering low inflation. The fiscal deficit of year 2019-20 is estimated to be 3.4% of GDP.
- **The Finance Minister pointed out that after completion of the fiscal deficit** consolidation programme, the Government would now focus on Debt consolidation. He said "We have maintained the glide path towards our target of 3% of fiscal deficit to be achieved by 2020-21. India's Debt to GDP ratio was 46.5% in year 2017-18. The FRBM Act prescribes that the Debt to GDP ratio of the Government of India should be brought down to 40% by 2024-25. "Along with completion of the fiscal deficit consolidation programme, we will now focus on Debt consolidation", he added.



Year End Review 2018-19: Ministry of Mines AMENDMENTS IN THE MINERAL AUCTION RULES

- **The Mines and Mineral Development and Regulation Act, 1957** was amended in 2015. Subsequent to the amendment, the Ministry of Mines notified the Mineral Auction Rules, 2015 on 20/05/2015 to prescribe the procedure of the auction process.
- **Auction of concessions** for major minerals (other than coal, petroleum and natural gas) was done for the first time in the history of mineral administration in the country. 53 blocks were successfully allocated. The value of minerals auctioned out is Rs. 2,25,850.97 crore. Revenue to states over lease period are estimated at Rs. 1,83,181.59 crore. The additional revenue on account of auction process is Rs. 1,43,169.29 crore.
- **The Ministry of Mines** was monitoring the process very closely with the state governments. The consensus emerged that the Mineral Auction Rules need to be amended to make the process more pragmatic without sacrificing the checks on successful bidders. Accordingly, the Mineral Auction Rules have been amended on 30/11/2017.

Amendments in the MINERAL CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT RULES (MCDR), 2017

- **The lease period of merchant** miners extended under the section 8A(6) of the MMDR Act, would expire on 31st March, 2020.
- **The auction process** needs to be initiated well in advance to ensure a seamless transition from the existing to the new lessees as the new auctioned leases and that the mineral production is not affected due to expiry of these leases. Exploration of the blocks was required to be done for the auction process of these mineral blocks.
- **For expediting** the exploration in these mines to be made auction compliant, sub rule 4A was inserted in Rule 12 of Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2017 (MCDR-2017) by way of an amendment notification, published in Gazette of India vide G.S.R. No. 289 dated 27.03.2018.
- **The rule mandates** exploration in G2 level as stipulated under clause (a) of rule 5 of the Mineral (Evidence of Mineral Contents) Rules 2015, to be carried out in the mining leases expiring in 2020 by 1st April, 2019.
- **The rule also lays** down the timelines for implementation of the exploration plan prepared with the approval of IBM for satisfying the requirements.

AERO-GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

- **GSI has launched National** Aero-geophysical Mapping Programme to cover 27 lakh line km of Obvious Geological Potential (OGP) and adjoining area in the country. The mapping of the total area divided into 12 blocks is envisaged to be completed in a period of 3 years by 2019 with total estimated cost of Rs.351 crore.

New National Mineral Policy

- **Ministry of Mines** vide its order No. 15/1/2017-M.V dated 14.08.2017 had constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Rajeswara Rao, Additional Secretary, M/o Mines, to review the National Mineral Policy, 2008 in accordance with the judgment dated 02.08.2017 delivered by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of Common Cause Vs. UOI & Ors. [Writ Petition (Civil) No. 114 of 2014].
- **Based on the report** submitted by the committee on 31.12.2017. Ministry of Mines prepared a draft National Mineral Policy (NMP) 2018 and uploaded it on the official website of the Ministry on 10.01.2018 for seeking comments/suggestions from the Stake Holders.
- **After suitably** incorporating the comments/suggestions received from the concerned, a draft Cabinet Note on NMP 2018 was prepared and circulated to the concerned Ministries/ Departments for their comments/ views as part of the Inter Ministerial Consultation. Comments/ suggestions received from the Ministries/Departments have been suitably incorporated.

STAR RATING OF MINES

- **Ministry of Mines**, in its endeavor for taking up exhaustive and universal implementation of the Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) in mining, has evolved a system of Star Rating of Mines.
- **The Ministry of Mines** instituted the Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) for taking up mining activity, encompassing inclusive growth, without adversely affecting the social, economic and environmental well-being, at present and also in future generation.
- **It has been institute** as a two tier system providing self-evaluation templates to be filled in by the mine operator followed by validation through Indian Bureau of Mines.
- **The evaluation templates** for Star Rating was notified vide notification dated 23.05.2016 for major minerals
- **Based on the performance** of the mining lease, 1 to 5 star rating, the positive impact of getting higher Star Rating will drive miners to quickly adopt sustainable mining practices.
- **The Star Rating has been included** as statutory provision in the MCDR for time- bound (2 years) achieving of minimum 4 stars.
- **A web enabled online system** for evaluation of measures has been developed and launched on 18th August, 2016 as a vital step for ensuring compliance of environmental protection and social responsibility by the mining sector. A template for star rating of miner minerals is also being prepared.
- **Since its inception, 9 mines** in July 2016, 32 mines in February 2017 and 57 mines in March 2018 have been awarded "Five Star" rating so far, for assessment years 2014-15, 2015-16 & 2016-17 respectively. For the Assessment Year 2017-18, 966 mine operators have submitted online templates till date, out of which 246 lessee have self assessment of Five Star. Field verification/validation by IBM is in progress and so far 20 mines have been rated as five star.

MINING SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (MSS)

- **Mining Surveillance System (MSS)** is a satellite-based monitoring system which aims to establish a regime of responsive mineral administration by curbing instances of illegal mining activity through automatic remote sensing detection technology.
- **Ministry of Mines & Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM)** have developed the MSS, with assistance from Bhaskaracharya Institute for space applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG), Gandhinagar and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY).
- **The system works on the basic** premise that most minerals occur in the continuity and their occurrence is not limited to the lease area but is likely to extend in the vicinity. The MSS checks a region of 500 meters around the existing mining lease boundary to search for any unusual activity which is likely to be illegal mining. Any discrepancy is found is flagged-off as a trigger.
- **The MSS is a transparent & bias-free system**, having a quicker response time and capability of effective follow-up. The deterrence effect of 'Eyes watching from the Sky' would be extremely fruitful in curbing instances of illegal mining.

- **A user friendly mobile app for MSS has been created** and launched on 24th January, 2017 at Gandhinagar for enabling public participation in assisting the governments endeavor to curb illegal mining, which was being used by the inspecting officials to submit compliance reports of their inspections.
- **In the initial phase, a total of 296 triggers** across the country covering a total area of 3994.87 hectares wherein, 48 unauthorized mining have been detected after inspection of the triggers by the state government officials. The training of all the States for its adoption of the MSS for minor minerals has also been done.
- **In the second phase, 52 major mineral triggers**, have been detected from the 3280 plotted leases (Working Mines 1689 plotted out of 1694 and Non Working Mines 1596 plotted out of 2129) across the country, out of which 36 have been verified by the State Governments and in 4 cases unauthorized mining activities have been identified.
- **Similarly, in respect of minor minerals, so far**, 130 triggers have been generated, out of which 62 have been verified and in 5 cases unauthorized mining activities have been identified.

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (GSI)

- **GSI has completed 8652.5 sq. km Specialized Thematic Mapping** (on 1:25,000 scale) out of 22,865 sq. km target during Annual Programme 2018-19 till the end of November 2018.
- **GSI has completed 62,032 sq. km National Geochemical Mapping** (on 1:50,000 scale) out of 1,78,356 sq. km target during Annual Programme 2018-19 till the end of November 2018.
- **GSI has completed 42,804.5 sq. km National Geophysical Mapping** (on 1:50,000 scale) out of 78,150 sq. km target during Annual Programme 2018-19 till the end of November 2018.
- **GSI has completed preliminary marine mineral investigation** for 24583 sq. km in Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) out of 24,000 sq. km target during Annual Programme 2018-19 till the end of November 2018 and close grid mineral investigation for 1959 sq. km in EEZ out of 3500 sq. km till the end of November 2018.
- **GSI has been engaged in 45 programmes of National Landslide Susceptibility Mapping** (NLSM on 1: 50,000 scale) during 2018-19. GSI has covered 30,900 sq. km by Landslide Susceptibility Mapping out of 77,000 sq. km target during Annual Programme 2018-19 till the end of November 2018.
- **GSI has digitized all its mineral exploration, baseline data generation**, fundamental geoscience and Geoinformatics reports and uploaded 22641 reports in OCBIS Portal.
- **In the calendar year 2018, GSI has reported augmentation of natural mineral resources** to National Mineral Inventory (NMI of Indian Bureau of Mines) of copper (38.832 million tonne), iron (163.134 million tonne), bauxite (3.13 million tonne), limestone (2013.77 million tonne), gold (0.9437 million tonne), potash (10.80 million tonne), andalusite (34.35 million tonne), Lead & Zinc (4.34 million tonne), REE (0.046 million tonne) and coal (6346.97 million tonne).
- **Geological Survey of India (GSI) has signed MoU with National Remote Sensing Centre- Indian Space Research Organization (NRSC-ISRO)** on 05.09.2018 to utilize airborne hyperspectral data by the scientists of GSI and ISRO to find surface signatures of mineralization in 14 promising areas in the coming 3 years; with National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), Hyderabad on 25.10.2018 for analyses for NGCM samples; with IIT (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad on 16th August 2018 on Collaboration for Academic and Research Program; with Haryana Sarasvati Heritage Development Board (HSHDB) on 20th August 2018 on the “comprehensive studies to reconstruct the fluvial history of the palaeo course of ancient Sarasvati River system in parts of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat” and signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on 03.05.2018 for outsourcing ground geophysical survey (Gravity and Magnetic) to CSIR-NGRI, Hyderabad over an area of total 25,000 sq.km.
- **The “Program 100x100 VAQ (Visibility, Activity, Quality) Enhancement Model”** was launched by the DG, GSI, through Video Conference from Oldham Hall, CHQ Kolkata on 14.8.2018.
- **GSI deployed an experimental People-centric Landslide Early Warning System** at Giddapahar Village, Kurseong, Darjeeling district, West Bengal.
- **GSI has implemented an integrated IT-enablement system** - Online Core Business Integrated System (OCBIS) with a goal towards comprehensive data management across Missions and Support systems. OCBIS has facilitated digital data collection from field, online submission and tracking of samples, end to end field season project management, and dissemination of data and products through a single standard based interface to all stakeholders, including Ministry of Mines, national and state level earth science organizations / departments, industry and citizens.

INDIAN BUREAU OF MINES Reviewing the mandate of IBM and opening of new Regional offices:

- **Recommendations of the Committee** for review and restructuring of the functions and role of the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) for manpower creation was optimized by the Ministry of Mines without considering increase in sanctioned strength in consultation with the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance.
- **The Department of Expenditure** and thereafter the Cabinet accorded approval to the proposal for upgradation, creation and abolition of certain posts of Joint Secretary-level and above but maintaining the total cadre strength of IBM at the existing strength of 1477.
- **The detailed discipline-wise**, revised sanctioned strength of IBM is notified vide Gazette Notification No. 31/72/2009-M.III.Vol.I (part-I) dated 15th May, 2018. For implementation of new manpower strength, finalization of recruitment rules of various disciplines is in progress.

Mining Tenement System (MTS)

- **The IBM is in the process of establishing a MTS**, which would primarily involve automation of the entire mineral concession life-cycle, starting from identification of the potential mineralized area and ending with closure of the mine; and connecting the various stakeholders for real-time transfer of electronic files and exchange of data.
- **M/s Wipro has been identified** as implementing agency and M/s NISG, Hyderabad as Project Management Unit (PMU) for MTS. Later on Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojna (PMKKKY), was included as a part of MTS.
- **The SRS Document of Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojna (PMKKKY)** along with System Design Document (SDD) for Phase-1 was approved on 30.01.2018 by Core Committee.
- **Three modules of MTS Project viz. PMKKKY**, Registration and Daily Returns were launched by Honorable Minister of Mines Shri Narendra Singh Tomar on 20.03.2018 during 3rd National Conclave on Mines & Minerals at New Delhi.
- **PMKKKY is currently live w.e.f. 27.08.2018** for data entry at district level and most of the States have started data entry. The Grievance Management and Mobile app for PMKKKY will be launched shortly. The Registration and Return modules will also go live shortly.

Project "Sudoor Drishti"

- **IBM has signed a MoU with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)**, ISRO on 21.01.2016 to undertake a pilot project on "monitoring of mining activities using satellite imagery and capacity building of IBM officers for three years including technical support for setting up of remote sensing laboratory in IBM". Two Remote Sensing Labs are being set up at Hyderabad and Nagpur.
- **An MoU has been signed with MOIL Ltd. on 25.04.2018** for field use of the remote sensing technology.

Revision of Threshold Values of Minerals

- **IBM is vested with the responsibility** to review the threshold value of minerals periodically under sub rule 7 of rule 12 of Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2017.
- **In order to take stock of the situation** and assess the stakeholder's views through deliberations, IBM invited comments and suggestions from the stakeholders and general public and also organized a series of five workshops on "threshold value of minerals at Goa, Bhubaneswar, Naumundi, Gandhinagar and Nagpur during the year 2017.

- **After examination of the suggestions** and comments of the stakeholders through an expert committee constituted for the purpose and based on the recommendations of the committee, the threshold value of eleven minerals are notified vide Notification No. C-284/3/CMG/2017 Dated 25.04.2018.

NATIONAL ALUMINIUM COMPANY LIMITED (NALCO) Performance Highlights for FY 2017-18:

- **The Company registered more than 100% growth** in net profit i.e. Rs. 1,342 crore in FY 2017-18 against Rs. 669 crore in previous year. The Net sales turnover for the year is Rs. 9,376 crore (highest ever since inception) registering a growth of 26% over last year.
- **Export earning of Rs. 4,076 crore** also highest ever since inception registering a growth of 12% over last year. The Company paid highest ever dividend since inception amounting to Rs. 1102 crore (114%).
- **CAPEX of Rs 1080 crore achieved** in FY 2017-18 is highest since FY 2009-10.

Corporate Social Responsibilities:

- **In FY 2017-18, NALCO has spent Rs. 29.01 crore** towards CSR activities against allocated fund of Rs. 27.88 crore.
- **Joining hands with Hon'ble Prime Minister's call** of Beti Bachao & Beti Padhao Abhiyan NALCO has adopted 100 poor & meritorious girls in FY 2017-18 (Cumulative- 277) under Nalco Ki Ladli scheme.
- **Under Prime Minister's Swachh Bharat Mission** and Iconic Shrine Development Programme, the Company has taken up 22 projects for comprehensive development of the holy city Puri. Some of the projects completed under this program are development and beautification of Gandhi Park, installation of 12 nos. of water posts to supply safe & clean drinking water, renovation of museum inside the Shree Jagannath Temple and facilitating commutation for senior citizens and differently-abled through launching of Battery Operated Vehicles.
- **To provide better health-care services** to inhabitants of periphery villages, NALCO is operating 9 Mobile Health Units (MHU) at Angul and Damanjodi. More than one lakh patients treated through the MHUs in 2017-18.
- **Launched Free of cost Battery-operated vehicle** service for senior citizens, differently-abled passengers and sick people in twin city Bhubaneswar-Cuttack.
- **Health Care: Foundation stone laid for construction** of a night shelter at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar in Aug'18 which will benefit the attendants and patients coming from far flung places. Construction of Super specialist eye care centre at Angul is in full pace which will cater to the critical care needs of interior masses.

SWACHHA ICONIC CITY

- **NALCO has taken up beautification** of Shri Jagannatha Temple, Puri under Swachha iconic city initiative. Shri Jagannatha Temple illumination completed. Both side walls of VIP road, Puri beautified with thematic painting based on Jagannatha culture. Renovation and beautification of Gandhi Park taken up at Puri.
- **JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ALUMINIUM RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN CENTRE (JNARDDC, NAGPUR)**
- **During the year 2017-18, JNARDDC** filed a record eight patent for indigenous R&D process developed. One patent was granted for the process for preparation of light weight Foamed bricks (LWFBs) utilizing red mud and fly ash admixture. Two copyrights were granted for software developed for real time determination of liquid us temperature and for cost optimization of recycling of different types of aluminum scraps. Director, JNARDDC being the Chairman of task force of aluminium sector nominated by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) contributed appreciably by monitoring the evaluation of energy audit reports of Indian aluminium industries for setting up normalization patterns for evaluating the performance of industries in terms of energy efficiency.

- **National Conclave on Mines & Minerals (NCMM)** Ministry of Mines organized the 4th National Conclave on Mines & Minerals on 13th July, 2018 at Indore, Madhya Pradesh. State Mining ministers, officials of central ministries including MOEFCC, officials of the state government, CEO's of mining industries, industry associations, academic institutions and others participated in the conclave.
- **For the first time**, conclave had an exhibition in which States put up stalls to showcase their mineral blocks which have been prepared to be put up on auctions in year 2018-19. The agencies concerned with pre-auction preparations such as Exploration agencies (GSI & MECL), transaction advisors (SBICAP, CRISIL, KPMG), DGPS survey agency (MECON), etc also put up their Stalls. IBM & MoEFCC also put up stalls on mining plan and EC & FC processes. Participation from the public sector and private sector companies in the exhibition on mineral and metal industry also provided an overview for better appreciation of mining sector by the investors in terms of making investment decisions.
- **Two technical sessions** were also held during the conclave. The State governments showcased the mineral blocks which are to be auctioned in the financial year 2018-19 in the first technical session. In the second technical session, presentations for the different stages in auctioning of a mineral block and its operationalization were highly appreciated.

20th Bharat Rang Mahotsav inaugurated in New Delhi, yesterday

- **The Minister of State for Culture (I/C)**, Govt. of India, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, inaugurated the 21-day-long nationwide theatre spectacle at Kamani Auditorium in a program presided over by Dr. Arjun Deo Charan, Acting Chairman, NSD Society and other senior officers of Culture Ministry, in New Delhi yesterday. Renowned danseuse and theatre artiste, Member of Rajya Sabha, Dr. Sonal Mansingh, eminent theatre director and former Director of NSD, Prof. Ram Gopal Bajaj were the Guests of Honour at the inauguration function where Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, Shri Ramdas Athawale was the special guest.
- **The 20th edition of Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM)**, the international theatre festival of India, is organized by National School of Drama (NSD), one of the prominent training institutions in the world. The National School of Drama (NSD) is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India. The 20th BRM comes with 111 national and international acts in its basket that includes folk and other traditional theatre forms, invitee plays, and productions by the students of the National School of Drama.
- **Speaking at the function, the Minister of State for Culture (I/C)**, Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, said, "This country applauds those who give back to the society. This country of 132 crores is bound together by culture and art. Our Prime Minister once told me that rich heritage and culture is our strength. Our art is our lifeline. We should use the power of art for the sake of humanity. Theatre Olympic helped create a new identity and BRM's spread to other cities helped to consolidate that. I request the Chairman and Director to make 20-25% invite for people who are new and young."
- **Shri Suresh Sharma, Director In-charge**, National School of Drama, welcomed the guests at the inaugural function and thanked the members of international and national theatre fraternity for gracing the occasion with their presence. He spoke in detail about the wide variety of plays to be staged during the festival and allied events such as 'Living Legend' and 'Master Class' to be held in New Delhi and 5 other cities.
- **The inaugural ceremony was followed** by a 50-minute musical performance 'Karanth ke Rang' based on the compositions of late Shri B V Karanth, directed by Shri Amod Bhatt and presented by Rangpurva group, Mumbai. Shri Karanth was a well-known director, actor and musician of modern Indian theatre in Kannada as well as Hindi. His plays like 'Jokumara Swamy', 'Sankranti', 'Huchu Kudure', and 'Oedipus' were trendsetters, which touched upon aspects of language music, songs and stylization. Shri Karanth's use of unusual instruments such as wood, stones, etc. in creating music and his ability to blend contemporary, classical and folk genres reflected his originality and style. He was an alumnus of batch 1962 of the National School of Drama and later became its director.
- **The 20th edition of BRM will also include** allied activities such as, 'Director's Meet', 'Living Leg-ends', and 'Master Class'. Apart from New Delhi, the NSD arranges parallel festivals of the 20th BRM in Dibrugarh (4th to 10th February, 2019), Varanasi (7th to 13th February, 2019), Ranchi (9th to 15th February, 2019), Mysore (11th to 17th February, 2019), and Rajkot (13th to 19th February, 2019). The festival will culminate in New Delhi on 21st February, 2019

The Journey of Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM)

- **Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM)**, the annual international theatre festival of India is organized by the National School of Drama (NSD), was established two decades ago to stimulate the growth and development of theatre across India.
- **Originally a national** festival showcasing the work of the most creative theatre workers in India, BRM has evolved to international scope, hosting theatre groups from around the world, and is now the largest theatre festival of Asia.

- **Till date, BRM** was celebrated in New Delhi and has travelled to several cities in India, presenting an overwhelming 1787 plays, and riveted thousands of audiences who basked in the glory of heart-winning stories and superior performances.

UPSC = Fever



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Scholarships for Girls to encourage better education and career opportunities

- **The Ministry of Human Resource Development**, Department of School Education and Literacy is implementing 'National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE)'. The objective of the scheme is to establish an enabling environment to reduce the drop outs and to promote the enrolment of girl child belonging to SC/ST communities in secondary schools and ensure their retention up to the 18 years of age.
- **The scheme covers** (i) all girls belonging to SC/ST communities who pass class VIII and (ii) all girls who pass class VIII examination from Kasturba Gandhi BalikaVidyalayas (irrespective of whether they belong to SC/ ST) and enroll in class IX in State/ UT Government, Government-aided and Local Body schools.
- **According to the scheme**, an amount of Rs.3000/- is deposited in the name of eligible unmarried girls as fixed deposit on enrolment in class IX, who are entitled to withdraw it along with interest thereon reaching on 18 years of age and passing class 10th class examination. The scheme is covered under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Scheme. The scheme is on-boarded on National Scholarship Portal (NSP) since 2015-16.
- **The Central board of Secondary Education (CBSE)** is implementing Merit Scholarship Schemes for single girl child to provide scholarships to the meritorious Single Girl Students, who are the only child of their parents.
- **It provide Rupees** Five Hundred (Rs.500/-) per month to Single Girl Child who is pursuing further studies for class XI & XII and have passed the CBSE class Xth exam with 60% / 6.2 CGPA or more marks/grades.
- **The Ministry of Human Resource Development**, Department of Higher Education is implementing the Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students since 2008.
- **Under the scheme**, financial assistance is provided to meritorious students whose family income of less than Rs.8 lakhs per annum for pursuing higher studies. The scheme envisages 82000 fresh scholarships award of every year, of which 50% is earmarked for girls.
- **The University Grant Commission (UGC)** is implementing the scheme of Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child since 2006 for providing financial assistance to selected students for pursuing Post-Graduation in Universities/Institutions/Colleges in India. This scheme has been on boarded on National Scholarship Portal (NSP) since 2017-18.
- **Apart from the above**, the UGC is also implementing the schemes namely 1) Swami Vivekananda Single Girl Child Fellowship for Research in Social Sciences. 2) Post-Doctoral fellowship for Women for providing financial assistance to selected candidates for pursuing research / higher research on full time/regular basis in University/Institute/Colleges in India.
- **The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** is implementing "Pragati Scholarship Scheme for Girls Student" to provide assistance for advancement of girl's participation in Technical Education. Under the scheme, 4000 scholarships are granted annually on "one girl, per family" basis where the family income is Rs.6 Lakhs/ annum or less. The candidates should have been admitted to 1st year of the Degree or Diploma programme in any of the AICTE approved institute during the academic year 2015- 16 through centralized admission process of the State/ Centre Government. The candidates are selected on merit at the qualifying examination to pursue technical education from amongst such candidates. Tuition Fee of Rs.30000/- or at actual, whichever is less and Rs.2000/- per month for 10 months as incidentals each year is provided under the scheme as financial assistance

National Grid:

- **The project** has been completed by the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Navratna Company of Government of India, under Ministry of Power.

- **Benefits of this project:** It will result in minimizing the massive use of diesel generating sets during winters, and thus will help in protection of beautiful environment, of pristine Ladakh region. This would also give huge boost to the tourism sector and enhance socio-economic development of Ladakh.
- **What is National Grid?** It is the high-voltage electric power transmission network in mainland India, connecting power stations and major substations and ensuring that electricity generated anywhere in mainland India can be used to satisfy demand elsewhere.
- **The National Grid** is owned, operated, and maintained by state-owned Power Grid Corporation of India. It is one of the largest operational synchronous grids in the world with 307.8 GW of installed power generation capacity. The union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep are not connected to the National Grid.
- **Benefits of a National Grid:** Better availability resulting in lesser power cuts. More stability in power.
- **Cross border transmission links:** Presently, India is importing electricity from Bhutan with synchronous transmission links while exporting power to Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar with asynchronous transmission links between the National Grid, and the electricity grids of these countries.

Know My India Programme:

- **Objectives of the workshop:** To help the children deal with the post-traumatic stress, provide them life tools to manage their emotions and eliminate disturbing impressions of the past events. To have them experience deep relaxation and peace, give them a broader and more inclusive view of the world and how each individual is connected with the others beyond social identities.
- **Key facts:** The programme is being organized in collaboration with the Art of Living Foundation. The Youth come from 6 states including Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Gujarat along with 10 official mentors.
- **About Know My India Programme:** It is a unique programme initiated by the NFCH to bring together financially assisted children of the Foundation from different States/Regions of the country to promote oneness, fraternity and national integration.
- **The programme** is all about familiarization with the environment, family life, social customs, etc. of the people living in different parts of the country; developing understanding of the common historical and cultural heritage of the country.
- **NFCH:** It is an autonomous organization under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The main objective of the Foundation is to provide assistance to the children / youth rendered orphan / destitute in communal, caste, ethnic or terrorist violence for their rehabilitation besides promoting communal harmony and national integration through various activities. The NFCH sponsors/conducts different activities for the promotion of communal harmony and strengthening of national integration.

Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM):

- **It is being** organized by National School of Drama (NSD).
- **Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM):** It is the annual international theatre festival of India organized by the National School of Drama (NSD). It was established two decades ago to stimulate the growth and development of theatre across India.
- **Originally** a national festival showcasing the work of the most creative theatre workers in India, BRM has evolved to international scope, hosting theatre groups from around the world, and is now the largest theatre festival of Asia. Relevant News Paper Articles:

Kerala sets up drug price monitor:

- **Background:** The move comes more than five years after the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) proposed such a system for the States and the Union Territories.
- **Composition:** The State Health Secretary would be the Chairman of the society and the Drugs Controller would be its member secretary. Its members include a State government representative, representatives of private pharmaceutical companies, and those from consumer rights protection fora. The society would also have an executive committee headed by the Drugs Controller.
- **Functions:** The new watchdog will offer technical help to the State Drug Controllers and the NPPA to monitor notified prices of medicines, detect violation of the provisions of the DPCO, look at price compliance, collect test samples of medicines, and collect and compile market-based data of scheduled as well as non-scheduled formulations.
- **Need:** The suggestion to set up PMRUs was made against the backdrop of the lack of a field-level link between the NPPA and the State Drugs Controllers and State Drug Inspectors to monitor drug prices. Pharma companies have been accused of overcharging prices of drugs in the scheduled category fixed by the DPCO and those outside its ambit too.

NGOs and regulation of their foreign funding

- **Greenpeace** India had its foreign funding blocked in 2015 as part of a nationwide crackdown on charities.
- **Significance of NGOs:** NGOs play an important role in the upliftment of the weaker sections of the society and their overall development. This is especially true in the case of India, where a vast majority of its population continues to remain under the poverty line and have little or no access to even basic facilities provided by the government.
- **Regulation of Foreign Funding:** The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 and rules framed under it (the "FCRA" or "Act") regulate the receipt and usage of foreign contribution by non-governmental organisations ("NGOs") in India.
- **Scope and objective of FCRA:** The intent of the Act is to prevent use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activity detrimental to the national interest. It has a very wide scope and is applicable to a natural person, body corporate, all other types of Indian entities (whether incorporated or not) as well as NRIs and overseas branches/subsidiaries of Indian companies and other entities formed or registered in India. It is implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- **In order to achieve the above objective, the Act:** Prohibits acceptance and use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by a certain specified category of persons such as a candidate for election, judge, journalist, columnist, newspaper publication, cartoonist and others. Regulates the inflow to and usage of foreign contribution by NGOs by prescribing a mechanism to accept, use and report usage of the same.
- **Definition:** It defines the term 'foreign contribution' to include currency, article other than gift for personal use and securities received from foreign source. While foreign hospitality refers to any offer from a foreign source to provide foreign travel, boarding, lodging, transportation or medical treatment cost.
- **Acceptance of foreign funds:** The Act permits only NGOs having a definite cultural, economic, educational, religious or social programme to accept foreign contribution, that too after such NGOs either obtain a certificate of registration or prior permission under the Act.
- **Registration and prior approval under FCRA:** In order to be registered under the FCRA, an NGO must be in existence for at least three years and must have undertaken reasonable activity in its field for which the foreign contribution is proposed to be utilised. Further, it must have spent at least INR 1,000,000 over three years preceding the date of its application on its activities.
- **The registration** certificate is valid for a period of five years and must be thereafter renewed in the prescribed manner. NGOs not eligible for registration can seek prior approval from FCRA for receiving foreign funding. This permission is granted only for a specific amount of foreign funding from a specified foreign source for a specific purpose. It remains valid till receipt and full utilisation of such amount.
- **The Act imposes various conditions on the use of foreign funds and some of them are as follows:** All funds received by a NGO must be used only for the purpose for which they were received. Such funds must not be used in speculative activities identified under the Act. Except with the prior approval of the Authority, such funds must not be given or transferred to any entity not registered under the Act or having prior approval under the Act. Every asset purchased with such fund must be in the name of the NGO and not its office bearers or members.
- **Reporting requirement:** Every NGO registered or having prior approval under the Act must file an annual report with the Authority in the prescribed form. This report must be accompanied by an income and expenditure statement, receipt and payment account, and balance sheet for the relevant financial year. For financial years where no foreign contribution is received, a 'NIL' report must be furnished with the Authority.

Millet Village scheme

- **The state** is also planning to expand its Millet Village scheme to various other districts.
- **About Millet Village scheme:** It is a special scheme to promote the cultivation of cereals such as millet, ragi, bajra and maize by setting up a millet village at Attappady. The project aimed at protecting seeds of traditional varieties of millets and ensures food security and livelihood for tribals.
- **What are Millets?** Millet is a common term to categorize small-seeded grasses that are often termed nutri-cereals or dryland-cereals, and includes sorghum, pearl millet, ragi, small millet, foxtail millet, proso millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet and other millets.
- **Benefits of Millets:** An important staple cereal crop for millions of small holder dryland farmers across sub-saharan Africa and Asia, millets offer nutrition, resilience, income and livelihood for farmers even in difficult times. They have multiple untapped uses such as food, feed, fodder, biofuels and brewing. Therefore, millets are Smart Food as they are Good for You, Good for the Farmer and Good for the Planet.
- **Nutritionally** superior to wheat & rice owing to their higher levels of protein with more balanced amino acid profile, crude fiber & minerals such as Iron, Zinc, and Phosphorous, millets can provide nutritional security and act as a shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among children and women.
- **The anaemia** (iron deficiency), B-complex vitamin deficiency, pellagra (niacin deficiency) can be effectively tackled with intake of less expensive but nutritionally rich food grains like millets. Millets can also help tackle health challenges such as obesity, diabetes and lifestyle problems as they are gluten free, have a low glycemic index and are high in dietary fibre and antioxidants.
- **Adapted to low** or no purchased inputs and to harsh environment of the semi-arid tropics, they are the backbone for dry land agriculture. Photo-insensitive & resilient to climate change, millets are hardy, resilient crops that have a low carbon and water footprint, can withstand high temperatures and grow on poor soils with little or no external inputs. In times of climate change they are often the last crop standing and, thus, are a good risk management strategy for resource-poor marginal farmers.
- **Efforts by government to promote millets:** In order to promote 'millets', India had on its part notified these climate resilient crops as "Nutri-Cereals" and allowed its inclusion in the Public Distribution System (PDS) for improving nutritional support in April.
- **Recognising** millets' anti-diabetic properties, the notification called it a "powerhouse of nutrients" and identified several varieties of millets for promotion. The millets in the category of "Nutri-Cereals" include Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Ragi), Foxtail Millet (Kangani/Kakun) and Buckwheat (Kuttu) among others.
- **Besides**, the government had in July substantially hiked the minimum support price (MSP) of millets so that more and more farmers may opt for cultivation of these less water consuming crops.

Facts for Prelims:

- **160th session** of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Council, held in Rome in December 2018, approved India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023.

World Wetlands Day 2019

- **India** is a party to the Convention since 1982 and committed to the Ramsar approach of wise use of wetlands. Theme: "Wetlands and Climate Change".
- **About Ramsar convention:** The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It is named after the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the Caspian Sea, where the treaty was signed on 2 February 1971. Known officially as 'the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat' (or, more recently, just 'the Convention on Wetlands'), it came into force in 1975.
- **Montreux Record:** Montreux Record under the Convention is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.

- **It is maintained** as part of the Ramsar List. The Montreux Record was established by Recommendation of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (1990). Sites may be added to and removed from the Record only with the approval of the Contracting Parties in which they lie.
- **Significance of urban wetlands:** In focusing on the theme “wetlands for a sustainable urban future”, this year’s World Wetlands Day sheds light on the importance of wetlands for cities. Today, 50% of the world’s population live in urban areas. Forecasts expect the urban population to rise to 6.3 billion by 2050 – a more than eightfold increase since 1950. While the urban proportion of the world’s population will more than double from 1950 to 2050, the number of the world’s wetlands has already more than halved over the past 100 years. However, wetlands play a vital role for cities and for the whole of humanity. For instance, they serve as a source of drinking water; they reduce flooding and the vegetation of wetlands filters domestic and industrial waste and improves water quality.
- **Way ahead:** Wetlands are at risk, from 1900 64% of wetlands around the world have disappeared with severe consequences for those who are living in close proximity with them, mostly Farmers. The International Community should make greater efforts to preserve these wetlands and put Farmers in the best conditions to take advantage of wetlands while respecting them.

NASA’s Hubble Telescope

- **The researchers** determined that this galaxy — nicknamed Bedin 1, after discovery team leader L. R. Bedin of the INAF-Osservatorio Astronomico di Padova in Italy — is a “spheroidal dwarf” just 3,000 light-years wide.
- **About the Hubble Space Telescope:** The Hubble Space Telescope is a large telescope in space. NASA launched Hubble in 1990.
- **It was built** by the United States space agency NASA, with contributions from the European Space Agency. Hubble is the only telescope designed to be serviced in space by astronauts. Expanding the frontiers of the visible Universe, the Hubble Space Telescope looks deep into space with cameras that can see across the entire optical spectrum from infrared to ultraviolet.

Operation Smile:

- **Context:** The ‘Operation Smile-V’ initiative launched by Hyderabad Police has helped in rescuing 325 children, who were either working as labourers or begging on the streets, since January 1 this year.
- **Objective:** To trace the missing children and rescue child labourers, Operation Smile-V was launched on January 1 across Telangana.
- **Operation Smile** also called as Operation Muskaan is an initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to rescue/rehabilitate missing children.

Nilavembu kudineer:

- **Context:** The Tamil Nadu government has distributed nilavembu kudineer (a Siddha medicine) concoction to treat people infected with dengue during the outbreak.
- **Nilavembu kudineer:** Under in vitro conditions, nilavembu kudineer (a Siddha medicine) was found to provide protection against chikungunya virus while it was effective as a treatment during acute phase of dengue infection.

Standard deviations: On jobs data:

- **Editorial Analysis:** Chairman and few members of NSC have quit their jobs. Possible reasons: Centre's refusal to release new data on employment that were due to be made public in December 2018.
- **Unease about the recently** unveiled back-series data on the economy. They were released by the NITI Aayog bypassing convention and the commission's views.
- **What's the issue now?** A key role of the NSC, set up in 2006, is to verify whether data being put in the public domain are reliable and adequate. Information has been collected and disseminated by successive governments under laid-down schedules, earning Indian data greater global trust than most other emerging market peers, especially China. However, the present government has undermined the role of NSC. More often, the views and findings of NSC are not taken into consideration.
- **On the question of job-creation** for the youth, credible data are missing. The government's approach to jobs-related data may be due to its disastrous demonetisation gambit which hurt supply chains and informal jobs in the economy and whose effects have lingered.
- **State of unemployment in India:** As per the new Periodic Labour Force Survey, for July 2017-December 2018, unemployment in the country has registered a five-decade high. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy has pegged job losses in 2018 at 11 million based on its regular employment surveys.
- **Conclusion:** Delay often undermines the credibility of data being released. Therefore, the government should ensure that the data is withheld and India's statistical integrity is not invalidated.
- **About NSC:** The Government of India through a resolution dated 1st June, 2005 set up the National Statistical Commission (NSC).
- **The setting up of the NSC** followed the decision of the Cabinet to accept the recommendations of the Rangarajan Commission, which reviewed the Indian Statistical System in 2001. The NSC was constituted with effect from 12th July 2006 with a mandate to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters.
- **The Commission** consists of a part-time Chairperson, four part-time Members, an ex-officio Member and a secretary. The Chief Statistician of India who is the Head of the National Statistical Office is the Secretary of the Commission and the Chief Executive Officer of the NITI Aayog is the ex-officio Member of the commission.
- **The commission** has also been entrusted with the functions of the Governing Council of the National Sample Survey Office which include overseeing the conduct of National Sample Surveys (NSS) on various socioeconomic subjects through the NSSO and the State Directorate of Economics and Statistics.



Creation of National Virtual Library of India as one of the components of National Mission on Libraries

- **The objective of National Virtual Library of India (NVLI)** is to facilitate creation of a comprehensive database on digital resources of India on information about India in an open access environment. Salient features of NVLI are : -
- **Federated searching** through multilingual user interfaces. Virtual learning environment E-Governance platform facilitating data analytics Multilingual searching and retrieval on ontology/thesaurus based.
- **The project of creation of National Virtual Library** of India costing Rs.72.34 crore had been entrusted to IIT Bombay (in collaboration with C-DAC, Pune and IGNOU, Delhi). An amount of Rs.71.78 crore has been released by Government to IIT Bombay till date.
- **The core software application** and cloud infrastructure for NVLI has been developed. Soft launch of NVLI has been done on 15th February, 2018. Harvesting of Metadata and its curation is on.
- **As per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** signed between National Mission on Libraries and IIT Bombay on 26.04.2016, the time frame for completion of the project by IIT Bombay is 3 years. The Ministry of Culture continuously monitors the progress of the NVLI project.

Upgradation of Secondary Schools to Senior Secondary level under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

- **Department of School Education** and Literacy has launched an Integrated Scheme for School Education-Samagra Shiksha, subsuming three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE), with effect from 2018-19. The new integrated scheme envisages school education as a continuum from pre-school to senior secondary level and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels.
- **The main objectives** of the scheme are provision of quality education and enhancing learning outcomes of students, bridging social and gender gaps in school education, ensuring minimum standards in schooling provision, support to states in the implementation of RTE Act, 2009 and strengthening of teacher education institutions.
- **The scheme** also provides for support for upgradation of secondary schools to senior secondary level and addition of new streams in existing senior secondary schools.

Year End Review 2018: Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers

- **DEPARTMENT OF FERTILIZERS (DoF) 1. Neem Coating of Urea** - As per the interim report of study by DAC&FW in 2016, the benefits of use of Neem Coated Urea are as under: - ü Improvement in soil health ü Reduction in usage of plant protection chemicals ü Reduction in pest and disease attack ü An increase in yield of paddy, sugarcane, maize, soybean, Tur/Red Gram ü Diversion towards non-agricultural purposes negligible. ü Due to slow release of Nitrogen, Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE) of Neem Coated Urea increases resulting in reduced consumption of NCU as compared to Normal urea.

- **New Urea Policy – 2015** ü to maximize indigenous urea production; ü to promote energy efficiency in the urea units; and ü to rationalize the subsidy burden on the Government of India
- **Achievements of NUP-2015:** - · The production of urea during the year 2016-17 and 2017-18 was 242.01 and 240.92 LMT, which is significantly higher than the production of urea during 2012-13 (225.75LMT) and 2013-14(227.15 LMT).
- **5. Amendment to NUP – 2015: Target Energy Norms** · DoF, on 28th March, 2018, notified the following in respect of Target Energy Norms: ü In respect of 11 urea manufacturing units, target energy norms have come into force w.e.f. 1st April, 2018. ü In respect of remaining 14 urea units, existing norms extended for further period of 2 years with penalties, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance. · Target energy norms to be continued upto 31st March, 2025. An expert body under NITI Aayog constituted to recommend the energy norms to be achieved from 01st April, 2025.
- **6. New Investment Policy- 2012** · The Government announced New Investment Policy (NIP)-2012 on 2nd January, 2013 and its amendment on 7th October, 2014 to facilitate fresh investment in urea sector and to make India self-sufficient in the urea sector. · Under NIP- 2012 read with its amendment, Matix Fertilizers & Chemicals Limited (Matix) 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 started on 1st October, 2017. · Chambal Fertilizers & Chemicals Limited proposed to set up a brownfield project with capacity of 1.34 MMT at Gadepan, Rajasthan.
- **8. Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** · The DoF has successfully implemented DBT in the entire country. The Pan India rollout of DBT completed in March 2018. · 100% subsidy on various fertilizer grades being released to fertilizer companies on basis of actual sales made by the retailers to beneficiaries. Sale of all subsidised fertilizers to farmers/buyers is made through Point of Sale (PoS) devices installed at each retailer shop and the beneficiaries to be identified through Aadhaar Card, KCC, Voter Identity Card etc. · A Project Monitoring Cell setup in the Department to oversee implementation of DBT exclusively. 24 State Coordinators appointed across all States to monitor the on-going DBT activities. · A dedicated 15-member Multi-lingual Help Desk set up to provide quick response to the queries of wide range of stakeholders across the country as a preparatory to DBT implementation.
- **9. Policy on Promotion of City Compost:** - · The Government of India approved a policy on promotion of City Compost, notified by the DoF on 10.02.2016 granting Market Development Assistance of Rs. 1500/- for scaling up production and consumption of city compost. · From 28.9.2016, to increase sale volumes, compost manufacturers willing to market city compost allowed to sell city compost in bulk directly to farmers. This boosted city compost sales to 199061.91 MT during 2017-18 from 96584.00 MT in 2016-17. An increasing trend in financial year 2018-19 observed. During the current year, the overall sale of city compost by marketers and manufacturers in bagged and bulk form till November, 2018 is 183378 MT. · Fertilizer companies marketing city compost covered under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for Fertilizers. · Fertilizer Companies adopted 384 villages for promoting the use of City Compost.
- **10. Use of Space technology in Fertilizer Sector:** - · DoF commissioned a three year Pilot Study on “Resource Mapping of Rock Phosphate using Reflectance Spectroscopy and Earth Observations Data” by National Remote Sensing Centre under ISRO, in collaboration with Geological Survey of India(GSI) and the Atomic Mineral Directorate (AMD). · The MoU for the propose study signed on 21.08.2017. Letter of Authorization for release of funds of Rs. 31.40 lakh issued by the DoF on 10.05.2018. · The work on first phase is in progress. Preliminary Data processing for the phosphate mapping is completed. Spectral analysis of samples collected during field work is completed.

DEPARTMENT OF PHARMACEUTICALS (DoP)

- **1. ‘Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana’ (PMBJP) (As on 30.11.2018)** · 4504 PMBJP Kendras functional in 35 States/UTs of the country. · 800+ medicines and 154 surgicals & consumables available in the product basket. · 625 medicines and 32 surgicals & consumables available in CWH of BPPI for sale. · PMBJP guidelines amended to provide incentives to PMBJP Kendras run by private entrepreneurs on the basis of their purchase of medicines (from Distributor/ Central Warehouse/ Regional Warehouse) in a month. The incentive given @ 15% of monthly purchase subject to a ceiling of Rs. 10,000/- per month upto a total limit of Rs. 2.5 lakhs.
- **Use of point-of-sale** software by PMBJP Kendra will not be a mandatory condition for receipt of incentives. The applicants belonging to weaker sections like SC/ST/Differently abled are provided medicines worth Rs. 50,000/- in advance within the incentive of Rs. 2.5 lakhs. · For north eastern states, naxal affected areas and tribal areas, the rate of incentive will be 15% of monthly purchase subject to a ceiling of Rs. 15,000/- per month upto a total limit of Rs. 2.5 lakhs.
- **2. National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER):** · Directors at NIPER Hyderabad and Hajipur appointed in June 2018 and November 2018 respectively. Now, all NIPERs have regular Directors. · Constitution of BoG for other six NIPERs in process. · 60% work of construction of NIPER Guwahati campus completed. · 50 acres of IDPL land allotted to NIPER Hyderabad. · Govt. of West Bengal recently allotted 10 acres of land at Nadia District for NIPER Kolkata. · Department decided to accept 12.5 acres of land allotted by State Govt. for NIPER Hajipur.
- **Construction of regular campus** approved for NIPER Ahmedabad and Guwahati only @ Rs 103.88 crores each. Rs 100.00 crores each approved for equipment to NIPER Ahmedabad, Guwahati & Hyderabad while Rs 55.00 crores each to NIPER Hajipur, Kolkata & Raebareli. · The matter of starting B. Pharma courses discussed in the 33rd meeting of Steering Committee of NIPERs held under Chairmanship of Secretary, Pharmaceuticals on 1.10.2018 at NIPER Kolkata. NIPERs have initiated procedural formalities for starting the undergraduate courses from next academic session.
- **NIPER Mohali** has bagged rank Number 1, NIPER Hyderabad as Number 6 and NIPER Ahmedabad as Number 14 in NIRF Survey 2018 conducted by MoHRD.

- **3. Medical Devices Sector:** · The DoP is sued guidelines for implementation of Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order, 2017 related to Medical Devices on 15.06.2018. · Further, the DoP, on 16.10.2018, amended the guidelines clarifying that USFDA/CE Certifications etc. shall not be mandatory for those medical devices for which Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) standards exist. This move is expected to boost manufacturing of indigenous medical devices.
- **The Department approved** a sub-scheme termed as Development of Common Facility Centre for Medical Devices (DCFC-MD) under the umbrella scheme for Development of Pharmaceuticals Industry. It aims to give financial assistance for creation of Common Facility Centers (CFC) in the upcoming Medical Device Parks. This is expected to lower down the cost of manufacturing of indigenous medical devices and hence making it more competitive.

Scheme for Development of Pharmaceutical Industry:

- **Central Sector Scheme with a total financial outlay of Rs. 480 crores.** · Objective to ensure drug security in the country by increasing the efficiency and competitiveness of domestic pharmaceutical industry with the following sub-schemes:
 - **Assistance to Bulk Drug Industry for Common Facility Centre** -Rs. 200 crores earmarked; creation of common facilities in any upcoming Bulk Drug Park promoted by State Governments/State Corporations;
 - **Assistance to Medical Device Industry for Common Facility Centre** -Rs. 100 crores earmarked; creation of common facilities in any upcoming Medical Device Park promoted by State Governments/State Corporations;
 - **Pharmaceuticals Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (PTUAS)** - Rs. 144 crores earmarked; facilitate Small and Medium Pharma Enterprises (SMEs) to upgrade their plant and machinery to World Health Organization (WHO)/Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) standards;
 - **Assistance for Cluster Development** - Rs. 30 crores earmarked; creation of common facilities in any pharma clusters including Bulk Drug, Medical Device, Ayurvedic, Unani and Cosmetics Units; and
 - **Pharmaceutical Promotion Development Scheme (PPDS)** - Rs. 6 crores earmarked; promotion, development and export promotion in Pharmaceutical sector; 22 events conducted during January, 2018 to November, 2018.. The said scheme; 3rd India Pharma 2018 and India Medical Device 2018 held at Bengaluru from 15-17 February 2018.
- **'Affordable & Quality HealthCare for All' - Availability of Cheaper Medicines** · NPPA has fixed retail prices of the 357 new drug under DPCO 2013 in 2018.
- **Cardiac Stents to cost 85% lesser** ü Ceiling price of Coronary Stents revised w.e.f. 12thFebruary, 2018. All types of cardiac stents now available in the price range of Rs. 7,923 to Rs. 28,849. ü Bare Metal Stents(BMS), having 10% market share, capped at Rs. 7,923; ü Drug Eluting stent (DES), having 90% market share, capped at Rs. 28,849; ü Millions of Heart patients in the country to save up to Rs. 1 lakh; ü Total estimated savings to consumers around Rs. 4547 crores.
- **Knee Implants to cost 69% lesser** ü Knee Implant ceiling prices fixed w.e.f.16thAugust, 2017 for one year; further extended for one year w.e.f. 15thAugust, 2018. ü Various types of knee implants now available in the price range of Rs. 54,720 to Rs. 1,13,950. ü Total estimated savings to consumers around Rs. 1500 crores.

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMICALS & PETROCHEMICALS (DoCPC)

- **1. Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemical Investment Regions (PCPIRs):** · The Government of India approved setting up of 4 PCPIRs in the States of Gujarat (Dahej), Andhra Pradesh (Vishakhapatnam–Kakinada), Odisha (Paradeep) and Tamil Nadu (Cuddalore- Nagapattinam).
- **4 PCPIRs** estimated to attract an investment of about Rs. 7.62 lakh crore and provide employment to around 34 lakh persons. These PCPIRs are at different stage of implementation.
- **HPCL-GAIL** completed feasibility study for 1.0 MMTPA cracker-cum-petrochemical complex at Kakinada in AP PCPIR. · Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change granted Environment and Coastal Region Zone (CRZ) clearance on 14.09.2017 for an area of 44445.18 hectare excluding forest land of 853.41 hectare for development of Gujarat PCPIR.
- **Master Plan** for Gujarat PCPIR completed. Master Plan for Odisha PCPIR and AP PCPIR underway.

- **Tamil Nadu PCPIR region notified by the State Government.** · A Committee co-chaired by Secretary (Petroleum) and Secretary (Chemicals and Petrochemicals) constituted to examine the issue of petrochemical demand and supply over next 15 to 20 years and to recommend policy options to the Government including recommendations regarding amendments to the existing PCPIR Policy of the Government.
- **2. Central Institute of Plastic Engineering & Technology (CIPET):** · CIPET focuses on 'STAR' – Skill Development, Technology Support Services, Academic and Research in all the domains of Polymer Science & Technology. · Presently, 32 centres of CIPET functional across the country and 7 more are in pipeline. · The Foundation Stone of CIPET: Centre for Skilling and Technical Support (CSTS) – Chandrapur laid on 11th November, 2018 jointly by Shri Nitin Gadkari and Shri Hansraj G. Ahir.
- **An Advanced Polymer Design and Development Research Laboratory (APDDRL)** being set up at Bengaluru for R&D in key areas of polymeric applications in defence, healthcare, solar energy, e-waste recycling etc.
- **CIPET tied-up with various PSUs** and industries for indigenization of plastics products, technology solutions, R&D with focus on "MAKE IN INDIA" such as Defense, marine & industrial applications. · During 2018-19 (upto Nov, 2018), CIPET has trained 28,774 students through Long Term Skill Development Programmes and Short Term Skill Development Programmes. CIPET also rendered around 50,118 (upto Nov, 2018-19) Technology Support Service assignments / job works for plastics industries.
- **4. Schemes for setting up of Plastic Parks** · Two new Plastic Parks in the States of Jharkhand & Madhya Pradesh (Bilaua) accorded 'final approval' by the Scheme Steering Committee, under the Chairmanship of Secretary (C&PC) in its meeting held on 05.12.2018.
- **5. Make In India** · The DoCPC is the nodal Department for implementing the provisions related to procurement of goods and services related to 'Chemicals' sector. · Department has issued Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order 2017 for six chemicals viz. (i) Soda Ash, (ii) Caustic Soda, (iii) Aluminium Fluoride, (iv) Carbon Black, (v) Formaldehyde and (vi) Chlorine, on 25th May 2018. · Further, the Department has issued Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order 2017 for forty-nine additional Chemicals, Petrochemicals, Dyestuff and Pesticides, on 23rd October 2018.



Steps Taken by Government for Conservation and Promotion of Medicinal Plants

- **As per information of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI)**, an organization under Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change estimated more than 8,000 species of medicinal plants are found in India.
- **The National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB)**, Ministry of AYUSH is presently implementing following schemes to encourage farming / cultivation, conservation, processing and promotion of medicinal plants throughout the country:
- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of National AYUSH Mission (NAM). Under 'Medicinal Plants' component of the NAM scheme the large scale farming / cultivation of medicinal plants is being supported. As per the scheme guidelines, the support is provided for: Cultivation of prioritized medicinal plants on farmer's land. Establishment of nurseries for supply of quality planting material. Post-harvest management. Primary processing, marketing infrastructure etc. For cultivation, the support is provided as subsidy to farmers @ 30%, 50% and 75% based on cost of cultivation.
- **Central Sector Scheme** on "Conservation, Development and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants". Under the scheme, the project based support is provided for following activities: In-situ conservation through development of Medicinal Plants Conservation and Development Areas (MPCDAs). In-situ/Ex-situ resource augmentation. Ex-situ conservation through establishment of herbal gardens. Livelihood linkages with Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) / Panchayats / Van Panchayats / Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) / Self Help Groups (SHGs). IEC activities like Training / workshops / Seminars/ Conferences etc.
- **Research & Development.** Promotion of marketing and trade of medicinal plants produce. Voluntary Certification Scheme for Medicinal Plants Produce (VCSMPP). The scheme is aimed to encourage Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Field Collection Practices (GFCPs) in medicinal plants and enhance quality and safety of their produce.

Schemes of National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation

- **The schemes of National Minority** Development Finance Corporation (NMDFC) are being implemented for the socio-economic development of the 'backward sections' amongst the notified minorities through the State Channelising Agencies (SCAs) nominated by the respective State Governments/UT Administration.
- **For availing assistance under** NMDFC schemes, the annual family income eligibility criterion under Credit Line-1 is Rs.98,000 for rural areas & Rs.1.20 lacs for urban areas. Higher annual family income eligibility criterion of upto Rs.6.00 lacs has also been introduced as Credit Line-2, for increasing coverage of beneficiaries under NMDFC schemes.
- **Following schemes are being implemented by NMDFC:- Concessional Credit Schemes**
 1. **Term Loan:-** Maximum Loan of up to Rs.20.00 Lacs per beneficiary is available under Credit Line-1 at an interest rate of 6% p.a. Higher loan of maximum up to Rs.30.00 Lacs per beneficiary is available under Credit Line-2 at an interest rate of 8% p.a. for male beneficiaries & 6% p.a for female beneficiaries.
 2. **Micro Finance:-** Maximum loan upto Rs.1.00 lac per SHG member is available under Credit Line -1 at an interest rate of 7% p.a. Higher loan of maximum upto Rs.1.50 lacs per SHG member is available under Credit Line-2 at an interest rate of 10% p.a. for male beneficiaries & 8% p.a for female beneficiaries. The micro-finance scheme is primarily aimed at extending concessional credit to women beneficiaries. The scheme is implemented through SCAs & also through established NGOs.
 3. **Education Loan:-** The Educational Loan of upto Rs.20.00 lacs for courses in India & Rs.30 lacs for courses abroad is available at an interest rate of 3% p.a. under Credit Line-1 while interest @ of 8% p.a. is charged from male beneficiaries & 5% p.a from female beneficiaries under Credit Line-2. Education Loan is provided for pursuing technical and professional courses with maximum course duration of 5 years. The scheme is implemented through SCAs.

- **4. Mahila Samridhi Yojana:-** Skill development training is imparted to group of women in women friendly trades. Training period is of maximum 6(six) months with training & raw material cost of upto Rs.1,500 per women while stipend @ Rs.1,000 is available for each women. During the period of training, the women are formed into Self Help Group, followed by infusion of micro-credit maximum upto Rs.1.00 lacs per member for the purpose of using the skill developed during the training, for income generation activities.
- **Promotional Schemes:-** As part of its developmental mandate, NMDFC also implements promotional schemes like Vocational Training & Marketing Support for the benefit of its target groups. Women beneficiaries are given preference. Detail is as follows:-
- **Vocational Training Scheme:-**NMDFC has realigned its Vocational Training Scheme with the common norms prescribed by the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) viz., "Kaushal Se Kushalta". Under this scheme, skill development training programs are organized as per common norms. Training programs of 200 to 250 hrs duration are organized at prescribed hourly cost. Stipend of Rs.1,000 per candidate per month and the cost of certification of the trained candidates is borne by NMDFC. There is placement guarantee of minimum 70% candidates trained under the scheme. This promotional scheme is implemented through State Channelising Agencies of NMDFC
- **2. Marketing Assistance Scheme:-** The Marketing Assistance Scheme is meant for individual crafts persons, beneficiaries of NMDFC as well as SHGs & is implemented through the SCAs. The scheme envisages to promote sale & marketing of their products at remunerative prices through participation /organizing exhibitions at State/District level.

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)

- **About the National Sports Development Fund:** Established in 1998, under Charitable Endowments Act 1890, vide Government of India Notification dated 12th November 1998.
- **Functions:** The NSDF supports sportspersons to excel in the field by providing opportunities to train under coaches of international repute with technical, scientific and psychological support and also in getting exposure to international competitions.
- **Financial assistance** is also provided to specific projects for promotion of sports and games sponsored by reputed Organizations/Institutes, provided the facilities so created are made available to a sizeable population of the area/region.
- **The Council:** The Fund is managed by a Council constituted by the Central Government. Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports is the Chairperson of the council. The Members of the Council include senior officers in the Department of Sports/Sports Authority of India.
- **The representatives** of the Apex industry organizations namely, FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM have been included in the Council as members. The representatives of Sports Promotion Boards of reputed organizations are also members of the Council.
- **Joint Secretary** to the Government of India in the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports is the ex-officio Member Secretary of the Council.
- **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS):** Launched by Ministry of Sports within the ambit of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF). It aims at identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for upcoming Olympic Games.
- **It will provide** selected sportspersons customized training at institutes having world class facilities and also other necessary support is being provided to the elite athletes. It will also provide a benchmark for selection of athletes on par with international standards.
- **Under it, Sports Authority of India (SAI)** and federations, which are members of Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), will be nodal agencies for disbursement for fund. They will make payments directly to beneficiary person and institution concerned on behalf of athletes.

National Service Scheme

- **About National Service Scheme (NSS):** It is an Indian government-sponsored public service program conducted by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Government of India.
- **The scheme was launched in Gandhiji's Centenary year in 1969.** Aim: The University Grants Commission (UGC) headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan recommended introduction of national service in the academic institutions on a voluntary basis with a view to developing healthy contacts between the students and teachers on the one hand and establishing a constructive linkage between the campus and the community on the other hand.

- **The broad objectives of NSS are to:** Understand the community in which they work. Understand themselves in relation to their community. Identify the needs and problems of the community and involve them in problem solving process.
- **Develop among themselves** a sense of social and civic responsibility. Utilize their knowledge in finding practical solution to individual and community problems.
- **Develop competence required** for group living and sharing of responsibilities. Gain skills in mobilizing community participation. Acquire leadership qualities and democratic attitude. Develop capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters. Practice national integration and social harmony.

Draft National River Ganga Bill, 2018

- **The bill propose** to ban the construction of jetties, ports or “permanent hydraulic structures” in the Ganga, unless permitted by the National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority. It proposes to create a management structure that will supervise the health of the 2,500-kilometre long Ganga which, the draft Bill defines, as ‘India’s national river.
- **The Bill lays down** a host of restrictions to ensure the “uninterrupted, ecological flow” of the river. Currently, a host of dams in the upper stretches of the river lead to the river’s flow being obstructed. The proposed legislation specifies that “unauthorized” activities that cause obstruction or discontinuity of water in the River Ganga due to engineered diversion of water or stoppage of water. Carrying out such activities are liable to a prison term of 3 years or fines upto ₹50 crore, or both.
- **The Armed Ganga Protection Corps (GPC)** personnel will be provided by the ministry of home affairs and will be deployed by the National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority. The GPC personnel will have power to arrest those who pollute the river covering offences like obstructing the flow of the river to commercial fishing.
- **The Bill has listed out a list of offences marked as cognizable which includes:** 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.
- **Need:** According to a map of Ganga river water quality presented by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to National Green Tribunal (NGT) in August 2018, only five out of 70-odd monitoring stations had water that was fit for drinking and seven for bathing. After three decades of efforts to clean the national river, it is a sad state of affairs that the river is not even fit for bathing.

Pre-Departure Orientation Programme

- **Key facts:** The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in collaboration with Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is conducting the PDOT programme under the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY). The National Skill Development Corporation is the implementing agency for this programme.
- **About Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** The Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY) is aimed at skilling Indians seeking employment abroad. The programme is also aimed at boosting the confidence of the Indian youth so that they don’t feel like strangers when they land in a country of their choice for vocation.
- **PKVY will train** and certify Indians, who are keen on overseas employment in select sectors, in line with international standards. It will be implemented by the National Skill Development Corporation through its training partners and in consultation with the Ministry of External Affairs and the Skill Development Ministry.
- **About NSDC:** National Skill Development Corporation India (NSDC), established in 2009, is a not- for- profit company set up by the Ministry of Finance. NSDC aims to promote skill development by catalyzing creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions.
- **Functions:** It provides funding to build scalable and profitable vocational training initiatives. Its mandate is also to enable support system which focuses on quality assurance, information systems and train the trainer academies either directly or through partnerships.
- **It also develops** appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives.

Rules To Allow Employment of Women in Mines

- **However, it is subject to the following conditions, namely:** In the case of women employed in any mine above ground: The owner of a mine may deploy women between the hours of 7 pm and 6 am in the mine above ground including opencast workings; the deployment of women shall be after obtaining the written consent of the concerned woman employee;
- **the women** so deployed shall be provided with adequate facilities and safeguards regarding occupational safety, security and health; the deployment of women shall be subject to the framing and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures on the basis of the guidelines issued in this regard by the Chief Inspector of Mines from time to time; the deployment of women shall be in a group of not less than three in a shift.
- **In the case of women employed in any mine below ground:** the owner of a mine may deploy women between the hours of 6 am and 7 pm in technical, supervisory and managerial work where continuous presence may not be required.
- **the deployment** of women shall be after obtaining the written consent of the concerned woman employee; the women so deployed shall be provided with adequate facilities and safeguards regarding occupational safety, security and health; the deployment of women shall be subject to the framing and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures on the basis of the guidelines issued in this regard by the Chief Inspector of Mines from time to time; the deployment of women shall be in a group of not less than three.
- **Background:** The Mines Act, 1952, restricted the employment of women in underground mines and also in opencast or aboveground workings of the mine during night hours between 7PM and 6AM.
- **Several women employees groups,** industry and students enrolled with various institutions pursuing mining engineering courses at degree and diploma levels have been representing to the government at different forum that women should be provided equal employment opportunity for working in mines. Requests from Mining Companies were also received.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- **About IORA:** The Indian Ocean Rim Association was set up with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean Region
- **The IORA** is a regional forum, tripartite in nature, bringing together representatives of Government, Business and Academia, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them.
- **It is based** on the principles of Open Regionalism for strengthening Economic Cooperation particularly on Trade Facilitation and Investment, Promotion as well as Social Development of the region.
- **India, Australia,** Iran, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, UAE, Yemen, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros and Oman are among the members of IORA.
- **Significance of IORA:** The existence of IORA is a reminder of the untapped potential of Indian Ocean regionalism. Nearly five decades ago, in the aftermath of decolonisation, the attempt to bring together the Indian Ocean states faltered amidst deep divisions within the littoral and due to the negative impact of the Cold War. Today, the IORA underlines the region's agency in shaping its own future.
- **Way ahead:** IORA's success would depend, to a large extent, upon what the middle powers of the Indian Ocean littoral, like Indonesia, Australia and India, can do. Together the three countries have already breathed new life into an organisation that few had heard of.
- **Also, India's** growing sea-borne trade and a historic power shift in the Indian Ocean compel Delhi to pay greater attention to securing a sustainable regional order in the vast littoral.

National Testing Agency Launched Mobile App

- **Benefits:** In order to ensure that no student is disadvantaged due to lack of resources, NTA has established a network of more than 4000 Test Practice Centres (TPCs) to acquaint the aspirants, especially those from rural areas with Computer Based Tests (CBTs).

- **Students across the country** can register themselves online at NTA Website or 'NTA Students App' for visiting the TPCs. All these services are provided to the students free of cost. So far, more than one lakh students have registered at these TPCs and more than one crore students have benefited from these 'App & Web' services.
- **About NTA:** In pursuance of the Budget Announcement 2017-18, the Union Cabinet, in November 2017, approved creation of the National Testing Agency (NTA) as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country.
- **Composition:** It will be chaired by an educationist who will be appointed by the MHRD. The agency will have a board of governors who will represent the member institutions.

Elephant corridors

- **Key facts:** The joint venture aims to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new, in the next ten years. The alliance joined hands to raise the mammoth sum as money was the main constraint in securing the land. NGOs Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN Netherlands and World Land Trust have teamed up with Wildlife Trust of India's (WTI) in the alliance.
- **What are Elephant Corridors?** Elephant corridors are narrow strips of land that connect two large habitats of elephants. Elephant corridors are crucial to reduce animal fatalities due to accidents and other reasons. So fragmentation of forests makes it all the more important to preserve migratory corridors.
- **Why protect elephant corridors?** The movement of elephants is essential to ensure that their populations are genetically viable. It also helps to regenerate forests on which other species, including tigers, depend. Nearly 40% of elephant reserves are vulnerable, as they are not within protected parks and sanctuaries. Also, the migration corridors have no specific legal protection.
- **Forests that** have turned into farms and unchecked tourism are blocking animals' paths. Animals are thus forced to seek alternative routes resulting in increased elephant-human conflict. Weak regulation of ecotourism is severely impacting important habitats. It particularly affects animals that have large home ranges, like elephants.
- **Need of the hour:** Efforts should be to expand elephant corridors, using the successful models within the country. This includes acquisition of lands using private funds and their transfer to the government. Ending human interference in the pathways of elephants is more a conservation imperative.
- **Related- About Gaj Yatra:** 'Gaj Yatra', a nationwide campaign to protect elephants, was launched on the occasion of World Elephant Day in 2017. The campaign is planned to cover 12 elephant range states. The elephant is part of India's animal heritage and the Government celebrates this day to spread awareness about the conservation of the species.
- **The 15 months campaign** will be led by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). The campaign aims to create awareness about elephant corridors to encourage free movement in their habitat.

Angel tax

- **What is Angel Tax?** Angel Tax is a 30% tax that is levied on the funding received by startups from an external investor. However, this 30% tax is levied when startups receive angel funding at a valuation higher than its 'fair market value'. It is counted as income to the company and is taxed.
- **The tax, under section 56(2)(viib)**, was introduced by in 2012 to fight money laundering. The stated rationale was that bribes and commissions could be disguised as angel investments to escape taxes. But given the possibility of this section being used to harass genuine startups, it was rarely invoked.
- **Why is Angel tax problematic?** There is no definitive or objective way to measure the 'fair market value' of a startup. Investors pay a premium for the idea and the business potential at the angel funding stage. However, tax officials seem to be assessing the value of the startups based on their net asset value at one point. Several startups say that they find it difficult to justify the higher valuation to tax officials.
- **In a notification dated May 24, 2018**, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had exempted angel investors from the Angel Tax clause subject to fulfilment of certain terms and conditions, as specified by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) now renamed as the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. However, despite the exemption notification, there are a host of challenges that startups are still faced with, in order to get this exemption.

- **Proposed reforms:** Earlier, start-ups whose aggregate amount of paid-up share capital and share premium after the proposed issue of share does not exceed ₹10 crore are eligible for exemption from the tax. The government is planning to raise this limit to ₹25 crore.
- **It is also planning** to amend the definition of a start-up to include companies that have been in operation for up to 10 years rather than the previous limit of seven years.
- **Is Scrapping Angel Tax possible?** The angel tax could not be scrapped as money laundering is a major problem. There is a network of 200 shell companies and they have been under control since 2012, so it cannot be scrapped.
- **However, concessions** are under consideration with the size of the start-up, the duration of its operation, and the income of the angel investor.

Hoveizeh long-range cruise missile:

- **Iran has announced** the successful test flight of Hoveizeh long-range cruise missile.
- **The Hoveizeh** Cruise Missile is part of the Soumar family of cruise missile and has a range of over 1,350 km (840 miles).
- **It is designed to use against ground targets.** The Hoveizeh missile needs a very short time for its preparedness and can fly at a low altitude and is manufactured by the Aerospace Industries Organization of Israel.

Legitimacy of the basic structure:

- **Origin: Supreme** Court ruled in Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala that Parliament's power to amend the Constitution was not unlimited, that the Constitution's basic structure was infrangible.
- **Current issues:** The common criticism is that the doctrine has no basis in the Constitution's language. The phrase "basic structure", it's argued, finds no mention anywhere in the Constitution. This has come to the fore in response to the recently introduced 103rd Constitutional Amendment, which provides for reservations based on economic criteria in government jobs and education.
- **Its detractors** also believe the doctrine accords the judiciary a power to impose its philosophy over a democratically formed government, resulting in something akin to what Union Minister Arun Jaitley once termed as a "tyranny of the unelected".
- **The need for upholding basic structure ideals:** Basic structure ideals cannot be ignored for not only is the basic structure canon legally legitimate, in that it is deeply rooted in the Constitution's text and history, but it also possesses substantial moral value, in that it strengthens democracy by limiting the power of a majoritarian government to undermine the Constitution's central ideals.
- **What happens if basic structure ideals are not protected?** There is a danger of granting untrammelled power to the legislature. This meant that those laws, even when discriminatory, were immunised from challenge. Were Parliament's powers considered infinite, the parliamentary executive can be removed, fundamental rights can be abrogated, and, in effect, what is a sovereign democratic republic can be converted into a totalitarian regime.
- **Basis for the Basic Structure doctrine:** Even if a legislature were bestowed with the widest of powers to amend the Constitution, its authority was always subject to a set of inherent constraints. Parliament was, after all, a creature of the Constitution. It could not, therefore, make changes that had the effect of overthrowing or obliterating the Constitution itself.
- **Article 368 grants** Parliament the power to amend the Constitution, making it clear that on the exercise of that power "the Constitution shall stand amended". Therefore, if what has to remain after an amendment is "the Constitution", naturally a change made under Article 368 cannot create a new constitution.
- **Hence**, for an amendment to be valid, the constitution that remains standing after such a change must be the Constitution of India; it must continue to possess, in its essence, those features that were foundational to it even at its conception.
- **Conclusion:** Therefore, the basic structure doctrine is grounded in the Constitution's text and history. It also performs an important democratic role in ensuring that majoritarian governments do not destroy the Constitution's essential character. It may well be the case that the basic structure doctrine is derived from the abstract. But that scarcely means it doesn't exist within the Constitution.

UPSC = Fever



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prime

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)

- **The Scheme aims** at providing Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from any of the age related disability/infirmity Low vision, Hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability, with such assisted-living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/infirmity manifested.
- **This is a Central Sector Scheme**, fully funded by the Central Government. The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the "Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund".
- **Under the scheme**, free of cost distribution of the devices, commensurate with the extent of disability/infirmity that is manifested among the eligible senior citizens will take place.
- **In case of multiple disabilities/infirmities** manifested in the same person, the assistive devices will be given in respect of each disability/impairment. Beneficiaries in each district will be identified by the State Governments/UT Administrations through a Committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner/District Collector.
- **As far as possible, 30%** of the beneficiaries in each district shall be women.
- **Way ahead: With more than 70%** of the 104 million elderly living in the rural hinterland, any serious initiative to improve the lot of senior citizens must incorporate adequate budgetary support for social welfare spending on the relevant programmes.
- **With the number of the elderly** in India set to surge by 2050 to almost 300 million, or about a fifth of the population, governments need to make more comprehensive efforts to address the problems of elderly.
- **Mains Question:** Discuss the features and prospects of recent policies meant to provide better social and economic security to India's growing population of senior citizens.

Asia LPG Summit

- **The summit** is being organized by the World LPG Association (WLPGA) in association with major Indian public-sector oil companies (OMCs) Indian Oil, Hindustan Petroleum, and Bharat Petroleum.
- **Objectives of the summit:** The summit will offer a unique opportunity to the global LPG industry to interact with development agencies, NGOs and non-profit organizations who have facilitated last-mile access to LPG for the beneficiaries.
- **The summit** will also bring together academia and private sector to exchange their views on the use of LPG and how pathbreaking initiatives such as 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana' can bring remarkable socio-economic transformation.
- **About World LPG Association:** The World LPG Association (WLPGA) is the authoritative global voice for the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) industry and the worldwide industry association which represents the interests of the LPG industry globally. The WLPGA promotes the use of LPG to foster a cleaner, healthier and more prosperous world.
- **With over 200 members** and presence in more than 125 countries, the WLPGA represents the interests of private and public companies from the entire LPG value chain under one umbrella. The WLPGA provides a platform for the exchange of best practices, facts and figures among its members.

- **The Association** regularly organises interactive meetings between technical experts, members and key stakeholders to demonstrate the benefits of LPG. The WLPGA was officially granted Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1989. Publications such as its Annual Statistical Review have become LPG industry references.
- **Women related issues.** Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.
- **Welfare schemes** for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Safe City project

- **Context:** Empowered Committee of Officers for Nirbhaya funds scheme has approved pilot Safe City projects in eight selected metropolitan cities, namely, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Lucknow with a view to provide safety to women in public places.
- **The project** would be implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with Centre and State sharing the funding in 60:40 ratio.
- **The major components of the Safe City project include, inter-alia:** Setting up an Integrated Smart Control Room; Setting up Pink Out-posts (exclusively administered by Women police) for facilitating ease of filing complaint by women; Pink Patrols of Women police; Setting up Women Help Desks in all Police Stations with Counsellors; Augmentation of existing Asha Jyoti Kendra;
- **Implementing** Safety measures in buses, including Cameras; Improving Street Lighting in identified Hot Spot areas; Setting up Pink Toilets; Integration of Women power-help line with single Emergency number.

Sentinelese Tribe:

- **Steps taken to ensure the protection of Sentinelese:** The entire North Sentinel Island along with 5 km coastal sea from high water mark is notified as tribal reserve.
- **The Government** respects their way of life style, therefore, has adopted an 'eyes-on and hands-off' practice to protect and safeguard the Sentinelese tribe. A protocol of circumnavigation of the North Sentinel Island has been notified. The ships and aircrafts of Coast Guard and boats of Marine Police make sorties around North Sentinel to keep surveillance.
- **They have been protected under:** A & N Islands (PAT) Regulation 1956. Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. Restrictions under Foreigner (Restricted Area) Orders, 1963. Visa Manual Conditions/Passport Act 1920, Indian Forest Act, 1927 and Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Who are the Sentinelese?** The Sentinelese are a negrito tribe who live on the North Sentinel Island of the Andamans. The inhabitants are connected to the Jarawa on the basis of physical, as well as linguistic similarities. Their numbers are believed to be less than 150 and as low as 40.
- **Based on carbon** dating of kitchen middens by the Anthropological Survey of India, Sentinelese presence was confirmed in the islands to 2,000 years ago. Genome studies indicate that the Andaman tribes could have been on the islands even 30,000 years ago.
- **Why are they said to be vulnerable?** It is said they have made little to no advancement in the over 60,000 years and still live very primitive lives, surviving mainly on fish and coconuts. They are very vulnerable to germs since they have not had contact with the outside world. Even a common flu virus carried by a visitor could wipe out the entire tribe.
- **Since the 1960s**, there have been a handful of efforts to reach out to the tribe but all have largely failed. They have repeatedly, aggressively made it clear that they want to be isolated.
- **Conclusion:** Currently, there is a one-size-fits-all policy. For instance, the Sentinelese should be left alone. The rights and the desires of the Sentinelese need to be respected and nothing is to be achieved by escalating the conflict and tension.

Magnetic north pole drifting fast towards Russia

- **What is Magnetic North Pole? How is it different from Geographic North Pole?** The Earth has two north poles- magnetic and geographic. Geographic north pole- It is northern axis around which the earth rotates and is fixed. The North Pole is located in the middle of the Arctic Ocean. The Magnetic North Pole (also known as the North Dip Pole) is a point on Ellesmere Island in Northern Canada where the northern lines of attraction enter the Earth.
- **A compass** needle will point to the Magnetic North Pole – which is different from the geographic north.
- **Origin of Earth's magnetism:** The origin of Earth's magnetism lies in its outer core, a more than 2,000-km layer of liquid iron and some other metals like nickel, that surrounds the central core, or the innermost part. This liquid iron is in constant motion due to Earth's rotation and various other reasons, and this motion produces a magnetic field.
- **What's the issue now?** Currently, the magnetic north pole is located somewhere over northern Canada, a fact discovered in 1831 by Sir James Clark Ross. Since then the magnetic north pole has been moving across the Canadian Arctic towards Russia, and has moved hundreds of miles over the last several decades. This phenomenon is known as the Polar Shift Theory.
- **Scientists** have now realised the pace of this movement has suddenly increased, quite significantly, from about 14-15 km per year till the 1990s to about 55 km per year in the last few years. This has led to scientists updating the World Magnetic Model (WMM) that tracks this movement. It was a year ahead of schedule.
- **Why it is moving faster?** Scientists do not have full clarity on. The movement of liquid iron and other metals in the outer core of the Earth is known to influence the magnetic field, but this movement is chaotic and turbulent. Scientists do not fully understand how the movement happens or why.
- **The study** of the phenomena happening inside the earth can only be done indirectly or through computer modelling, because of the extremely hot temperatures prevailing there. Scientists hope that this acceleration in the shifting of magnetic north pole would throw some new insights into the phenomena happening deep inside the Earth's surface.
- **The consequences:** The entire transportation sector, especially aviation and shipping, depends on correctly knowing the position of magnetic north to chart out their navigation paths. Similarly, it is crucial for militaries, who need to know this for firing their missiles or for other purposes. Knowing the magnetic north is vital for a number of civilian applications as well.
- **The compasses** that are used in modern instrumentation are much more sophisticated, digital and more accurate. This is the reason why they need to be recalibrated to reflect the change in the magnetic north pole. This is what the unscheduled release of the WMM has done.
- **What is the World Magnetic Model?** James Clark Ross first located magnetic north in 1831 in the scattered islands of Canada's Nunavut territory. Since then, the pole has largely marched north, traversing hundreds of miles over the last several decades.
- **To keep up** with all these changes, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the British Geological Survey developed what eventually became known as the World Magnetic Model.
- **The model** is updated every five years, with the last update in 2015. Between each update, scientists check the model's accuracy against data from ground magnetic observatories and the European Space Agency's Swarm mission—a trio of magnetic-field mapping satellites that zip around Earth 15 to 16 times each day.

Kisan Credit Card Scheme

- **Campaign:** The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare has announced the launch of campaign with immediate effect to saturate farmers for financial inclusion under Kisan Credit Cards (KCC).
- **This campaign** will be launched through the Financial Institutions including Commercial Banks, Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks in collaboration with the State Governments. The Department of Financial Services has already issued directives to these financial institutions under their purview. There are around 6.95 crore active KCCs.
- **Kisan Credit Card Scheme:** The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme was announced in the Budget speech of 1998-99 to fulfil the financial requirements of the farmers at various stages of farming through institutional credit.
- **The model scheme** was prepared by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) on the recommendation of V Gupta committee. The KCC scheme is being implemented by the all Co-operative banks, Regional Rural Banks and Public Sector Banks throughout the country. Scheme covers risk of KCC holders against death or permanent disability resulting from accidents.

- **Objectives:** To provide adequate and timely credit support from the banking system to the farmers at the cheap rate of interest. To provide credit at the time of requirement. To support post-harvest expenses. To provide Working capital for maintenance of farm assets and activities allied to agriculture.
- **Investment credit** requirement for agriculture and allied activities (land development, pump sets, plantation, drip irrigation etc.) Consumption requirements of farmers.
- **Other Salient features of the Scheme:** Revolving cash credit facility involving any number of drawals and repayments within the limit. Limit to be fixed on the basis of operational land holding, cropping pattern and scale of finance.
- **Entire production credit** needs for full year plus ancillary activities related to crop production to be considered while fixing limit. Card valid for 5 years subject to annual review. As incentive for good performance, credit limits could be enhanced to take care of increase in costs, change in cropping pattern, etc.
- **Conversion/reschedulement** of loans also permissible in case of damage to crops due to natural calamities. Operations may be through issuing branch (and also PACS in the case of Cooperative Banks) through other designated branches at the discretion of bank. Crop loans disbursed under KCC Scheme for notified crops are covered under Crop Insurance Scheme, to protect the interest of the farmer against loss of crop yield caused by natural calamities, pest attacks etc.

India's communication satellite GSAT-31 launched from French Guiana

- **Ariane 5 carried two communication satellites:** Saudi Geostationary Satellite 1/Hellas Sat 4 and Hellas Sat. ISRO's GSAT-31.
- **About GSAT- 31:** A telecommunications satellite designed and manufactured by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). India's 40th communication satellite and derives its heritage from ISROs earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series. It will be placed in Geostationary Orbit (36,000 km above the equator) using its onboard propulsion system.
- **It has a unique** configuration of providing flexible frequency segments and flexible coverage. Hence, it will provide communication services to Indian mainland and islands. It will also provide DTH Television Services, connectivity to VSATs for ATM, Stock-exchange, Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) and e-governance applications. The satellite will also be used for bulk data transfer for a host of emerging telecommunication applications.
- **Key Objectives:** Augment the Ku-band transponder capacity in Geostationary Orbit for at least 15 years.
- **Provide continuity** to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites. Help bridge the digital divide in the Indian subcontinent as part of an ambitious Indian space program, whose objectives are to develop India while pursuing scientific research and planetary exploration.



Government has developed various mechanisms for monitoring of quality of education

- **Central Government has developed the following mechanism for the monitoring of quality of education in Government schools:** (1) A web portal called ShaGun (from the words Shaala and Gunvatta) which has two parts i.e., one is a Repository of good practices, photographs, videos, studies, newspaper articles etc on elementary education, State /UT wise has been developed. Its purpose is to showcase success stories and also to provide a platform for all stakeholders to learn from each other, and instill a positive competitive spirit among all the States and UTs.
- **The second part** is the online monitoring module of Shagun which measures state-level performance and progress against key educational indicators which enables the Government of India and the State and UT Departments of education to conduct real-time assessments which normal paper-based monitoring mechanisms did not allow. Through Shagun, the data collection and reporting processes have been simplified; resulting in a totally transparent and efficient system.
- **In addition**, an online Project Monitoring System (PMS) has been developed to monitor physical and financial progress of implementation of various components under Samagra Shiksha including appraisal of Annual Plans and issuing of sanctions etc.
- **(2) In order** to increase focus on quality of elementary education, the Central rules to the RTE Act, 2009 have been amended on 20th February, 2017 to include reference on class-wise, subject-wise Learning Outcomes. The Learning Outcomes for each class in Languages (Hindi, English and Urdu), Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Science and Social Science up to the elementary stage have, accordingly, been finalized and shared with all States and UTs. Learning
- **Outcomes have been translated in different languages and serve as a benchmark for student's capabilities to be achieved in each subject & class.** (3) National Achievement Surveys are carried out by National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to assess learning achievement of children in Classes – III, V, VIII, and X. The National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2017 was held on 13th November for assessing the competencies of children at the grade levels III, V and VIII covering 22 lakh students from 1.10 lakh schools in all 36 states and UTs. NAS (2017) was administered with districts as the unit of reporting in different subject areas such as languages, mathematics, EVS/Science and Social Sciences in the Government and Government aided schools. The competency based test was based on the Learning Outcomes which were recently incorporated in the Central Rules for RTE Act by the Government of India.
- **The National Achievement Survey** for students of Class X was similarly, held on 5th February 2018, with a district level sampling framework covering nearly 15.5 lakh students using multiple test booklets in Mathematics, Modern Indian Languages, English, Sciences and Social Sciences. NAS district report cards have been shared with the States and UTs to help in identifying gaps at the district level. Subsequently, a framework of intervention has been developed and shared with States to improve the quality of learning in the schools.
- **(4) Government of India** has decided to participate in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) to be conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2021. PISA is a competency based assessment which unlike content-based assessment, measures the extent to which students have acquired key competencies that are essential for full participation in modern societies. Learnings from participation in PISA help to introduce competency based examination reforms in the school system and help move away from rote learning. The CBSE and NCERT are part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.
- **(5) Shaala Siddhi** is a School Standards and Evaluation Framework, developed by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), which enables the schools to self evaluate based on seven key domains.
- **(6) The NCERT** has developed a framework for Performance Indicators for Elementary School Teachers (PINDICS) and shared with the states. PINDICS is a framework for assessing teacher performance and providing constructive feedback for further improvement.

Further, Central Government has taken the following initiatives for improving quality of education:

- **(i) Section 23(2) of the RTE Act** has been amended to extend the period for training of untrained in-service elementary teachers to 31st March, 2019. As per above amendment, all untrained in-service teachers working in Government, Government aided, and Private un-aided schools should acquire minimum qualification as laid down by an academic authority, authorized by the Central Government, by 31st March, 2019. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) has been entrusted to conduct this training through ODL (Open Distance Learning) mode. The online D.El.Ed. course has started from 3rd October, 2017. More than 13 Lakh teachers have joined these courses.
- **(ii) The Department of School Education and Literacy** has launched an Integrated Scheme for School Education-Samagra Shiksha, subsuming three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE). With effect from 1st April, 2018. The new integrated scheme envisages school education as a continuum from pre-school to senior secondary level and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels. The main objectives of the scheme are to provide quality education, enhancing learning outcomes of students, bridging social and gender gaps in school education, ensuring requisite infrastructure in schools, support to states in the implementation of RTE Act, 2009 and strengthening of teacher education institutions.
- **(iii) The Government has also launched Rashtriya Aavishkar Abhiyan (RAA)** programme on 09.07.2015, to motivate and engage children of the age group from 6-18 years in Science, Mathematics and Technology through observation, experimentation, inference drawing, model building, etc. both through inside and outside classroom activities. The Central Government, supports States and UTs on early grade reading, writing & comprehension, and early Mathematics programmes through a sub-programme namely 'Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat' (PBBB) in foundational years of schooling.
- **(iv) e PATHSHALA: a single point** repository of e resources containing NCERT textbooks and various other learning resources has been developed for showcasing and disseminating all educational resources including textbooks, audio, video, periodicals, and a variety of other print and non-print materials
- **(v) MHRD, has launched a Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** platform popularly known as SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active learning for Young Aspiring Minds) on 9th July, 2017. The portal is offering various online courses for school education and higher education. NCERT has been developing course modules for Massive Open and Online Course (MOOCs) for school education system in 12 subject areas (Accountancy, business studies, biology, chemistry, economic, history, geography, mathematics, physics, political science, psychology and sociology) for classes IX-XII. Twelve (12) courses and twenty one (21) courses have been completed in the first cycle and second cycle (completed on 30 Nov. 2018) on SWAYAM platform (<https://swayam.gov.in/>) respectively. Nearly 22,000 students and 30,000 students were registered in the first cycle and second cycle respectively.
- **(vi) A programme for utilization of satellite** communication technologies for transmission of educational e-contents through 32 National Channels i.e. SWAYAM PRABHA DTH-TV has been launched. Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET)-NCERT is the national coordinator for one DTH TV channel i.e., Kishore Manch (#31) and has started feeding a 24x7 educational TV channel w.e.f. 09 July, 2018. Besides, NIOS is running 5 channels for teachers, for Secondary and Sr. Secondary levels and for sign language.
- **(vii) Performance Grading Index (PGI)** - In order to objectively evaluate the performance of the school education system in the States/UTs, MHRD has designed a 70 indicators based matrix to grade the States/UTs. The indicators have been chosen after detailed stakeholder consultation and the information on these indicators is drawn from the inputs provided by the respective States/UTs. This grading system will assist the States and UTs to identify the gap and design appropriate interventions to bridge them.
- **(viii) Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE +)** - Timely and accurate data is the basis of sound and effective planning and decision making. Towards this end, the establishment of a well-functioning and sustainable Educational Management Information System is of utmost importance today. Therefore from 2018-19, it has been decided to launch the UDISE+ application, so that it becomes an effective tool for decision making. The entire system will be online and will gradually move towards collecting real time data.
- **(ix) In order to provide supplementary** learning material for students and for upgrading the skills of teachers, MHRD has developed a dedicated Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) platform. The high quality e-learning material both for students and teachers are being uploaded by Ministry and States/UTs on this portal. This is expected to substantially augment the knowledge base of the students and technical skills of teachers at no additional cost.

Flamingo sanctuary:

- **Context:** A committee, chaired by Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan, has accorded wildlife clearance to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed train corridor that encroaches upon a flamingo sanctuary and the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, the home to leopards, in Mumbai.
- **About Sanjay Gandhi National Park:** Sanjay Gandhi National Park is spread over three districts – Palgar, Thane and Mumbai Suburb. The National Park is home to a number of endangered species of flora and fauna and harbours approximately 800 species of flowering plants, 45 species of mammals, 43 species of reptiles among others.
- **Flamingo sanctuary:** Western side of the Thane creek is a dedicated flamingo sanctuary. Thane Creek is home to flamingos as well as other migratory and residential bird species. It is Maharashtra's second marine sanctuary after the one at Malvan.

Sangeet Natak Akademi:

- **Context:** President of India to confer Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards (Akademi Puraskar) for the Year 2017.
- **About Sangeet Natak Akademi:** The Sangeet Natak Akademi – India's national academy for music, dance and drama – is the first National Academy of the arts set-up by the Republic of India. It was created by a resolution of Government of India. It was set up in 1952. The academy functions as the apex body of the performing arts in the country to preserve and promote the vast cultural heritage of India expressed in music, dance and drama.
- **It also works with governments and art academies in states and territories of the country.** The academy Renders advice and assistance to the government of India in the task of formulating and implementing policies and programmes in the field. It carries a part of the responsibilities of the state for fostering cultural contacts between regions in the country, as well as between India and the world.
- **The Akademi Awards** are the highest national recognition conferred on eminent artistes. Each year the Academy awards Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships, Ratna Sadsya, to distinguished individuals for their contribution to the field of arts, music, dance and theatre. Ustad Bismillah Khan award is given to young artists for their talent in the fields of music, dance and drama.

Categorisation of Farmers- mentioned in PIB:

- **Context:** In agriculture Census, the operational holdings are categorised in five size classes as follows:
- **Marginal: Below 1.00 hectare.** Small: 1.00-2.00 hectare. Semi- Medium: 2.00-4.00 hectare. Medium: 4.00-10.00 hectare. Large: 10.00 hectare and above.
- **Thailand makes Siamese fighting fish national aquatic animal:** Context: Siamese fighting fish is named Thailand's national aquatic animal. Known in the West as a betta fish, the underwater brawler is popular in home aquariums for its iridescent body and many-hued tail. IUCN status: Vulnerable.

Wrong on the Rohingya:

- **The Editorial discusses** about the plight of Rohingyas, India's position and the need for reconsideration of its views based on international conventions, constitutional provisions and moral issues.
- **Why in News?** Based on allegations that India's repatriation of the Rohingya refugees contravenes international principles on refugee law as well as domestic constitutional rights, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has called for a report from India on the deportation of a group of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar in October 2018.
- **How does the Global Framework on Refugees seeks to protect refugees?** In order to address the problem of mass inter-state influx of refugees, UN adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951. This was followed by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1967.
- **Most notable features** of the Convention is the principle of non-refoulement. The norm requires that "no contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."
- **Does it not apply to India?** It is often argued that the principle does not bind India since it is a party to neither the 1951 Convention nor the Protocol. However, the prohibition of non-refoulement of refugees constitutes a norm of customary international law, which binds even non-parties to the Convention. UN has clarified that it is binding on all States, including those which have not yet become party to the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol.
- **Constitutional safeguards for refugees:** Article 51(c) talks about promotion of respect for international law and treaty obligations. Therefore, India cannot deport rohingyas disrespecting the international treaty.
- **There are few Fundamental Rights** available to citizens, persons including foreign citizens– the right to equality and the right to life, among others. Therefore, the Rohingya refugees, while under the jurisdiction of the national government, cannot be deprived of the right to life and personal liberty. In National Human Rights Commission v. State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996), the Supreme Court has reiterated this.

- **What's missing?** India lacks a specific legislation to address the problem of refugees, in spite of their increasing inflow. The Foreigners Act, 1946, fails to address the peculiar problems faced by refugees as a class. It also gives unbridled power to the Central government to deport any foreign citizen.
- **The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill** of 2019 strikingly excludes Muslims from its purview and seeks to provide citizenship only to Hindu, Christian, Jain, Parsi, Sikh and Buddhist immigrants persecuted in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is important to note that the majority of the Rohingya are Muslims.
- **Some experts** point out that this limitation on the basis of religion fails to stand the test of equality under Article 14 of the Constitution and offends secularism, a basic feature of the Constitution.
- **Why Rohingyas need protection?** The Rohingya are "among the world's least wanted and most persecuted people." In Myanmar, they are denied citizenship, the right to own land and travel, or to even marry without permission, says the report. According to the UN, the Rohingya issue is one of systematic and widespread ethnic cleansing by Myanmar. Therefore, the discrimination that the Rohingya face is unparalleled in contemporary world politics.
- **Conclusion:** The deportation of refugees by India is not only unlawful but breaches a significant moral obligation. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. Therefore, India needs to reconsider its earlier decision.



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Ministry of Corporate Affairs Year Ender-2018

- **Companies (Amendment) Act, 2017 enacted; Out of total 93 Sections, 92 Sections brought into force along with relevant Rules** MCA proposes to introduce Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to replace Companies (Amendment) Ordinance 2018 in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Act, 2018 & Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Act, 2018 notified
- **NFRA** established to enhance investor & public confidence in financial disclosures of companies
- **E-governance initiatives launched for streamlining various processes In pursuance to objective** of providing greater "Ease of Doing Business" to all stakeholders, bring about greater transparency in corporate structure and better Corporate compliance so as to enhance the efficiency of the processes under Companies Act, 2013, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has taken several landmark initiatives / decisions during last one year (January-November, 2018).
- **The important ones** are Companies (Amendment) Act, 2017, Companies (Amendment) Ordinance 2018, establishment of National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), amendments in Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, eKYC drive for Directors of all companies and speedier processing of incorporation related applications, uniformity in application of rules and eradicating discretion.
- **India has improved** its ranking on the World Bank's "Doing Business" 2019 report released on 31st October, 2018. As per the report, India has moved up 23 spots to 77th position as compared to 100th position in 2017 by improving its rank in six out of ten parameters relating to starting and doing business in India. Ministry of Corporate Affairs has contributed towards starting a business, insolvency resolution and protection of minority interests.

COMPANIES ACT

- **COMPANIES ACT, 2013:** Till date, all sections of the Companies Act, 2013 [CA-13] except one section viz. Section 465 have been notified. Part of section 2 [clause 67(ix)] and part of section 230 [sub-section (11) and (12)] are yet to be commenced.
- **COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2017:** Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2017 was assented by Honourable President of India on 3rd January, 2018 and got enacted as the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2017 [CAA-17]. The CAA-17 contains total 93 sections. Till date, out of total 93 sections of CAA-17, 92 sections have been brought into force along with relevant rules. Commencement of one section (section 81 - relating to Nidhis) and parts of section 23 and 80 of CAA-17 requires amendment in 3 sets of Rules and Forms notified under the Companies Act, 2013 which requires examination in the Ministry and is likely to take some more time. The Ministry proposes to notify section 81 of CAA-17 and part of section 23 of such Act along with relevant rules by 31st December 2018.
- **The Committee to review** the existing framework dealing with offences under the Companies Act, 2013 and related matters submitted its report to the Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Shri Arun Jaitley. The Committee broke down all penal provisions into eight categories based on the nature of offences.
- **The Committee** recommended that the existing rigour of the law should continue for serious offences, covering six categories, whereas for lapses that are essentially technical or procedural in nature, mainly falling under two categories may be shifted to in-house adjudication process. This would serve the twin purposes promoting of Ease of Doing Business and better corporate compliance.
- **It would also** reduce the number of prosecutions filed in the Special Courts, which would, in turn, facilitate speedier disposal of serious offences and bring serious offenders to book. The cross-cutting liability under section 447, which deals with corporate fraud, would continue to apply wherever fraud is found. Most sections under review and recommendation have been notified for commencement.
- **Based on the recommendations** of the Committee and to achieve objectives of promotion of Ease of Doing Business and better Corporate Compliance the Government decided to promulgate an Ordinance. Accordingly the Companies (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 was promulgated on 2.11.2018.

- **The MCA proposes** to introduce a Replacement Bill (viz. Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018) to replace the Companies (Amendment) Ordinance 2018 in the Winter Session (2018) of Parliament.

INSOLVENCY & BANKRUPTCY

- **In year 2018, the President gave assent to promulgate Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018.** Insolvency and Bankruptcy process has taken good shape since 2017 and is a fast evolving legislation. A major factor behind the effectiveness of the new Code has been the adjudication by the Judiciary.
- **The Code** provides strict time limits for various procedures under it. In this process a rich- case law has evolved reducing the scope of legal uncertainty.
- **The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Act, 2018** notified on 19.01.2018 replaced IBC (Amendment) Ordinance which further amended provisions relating to prohibition on certain persons from submitting a resolution plan, so as to provide more clarity. Further, Second amendment was also done by the way of Ordinance in August, 2018 on the recommendations of Insolvency Law Committee.
- **The Ordinance** was promulgated vide notification dated 06.06.2018 to amend the Code to balance the interests of various stakeholders in the Code, especially interests of home buyers and micro, small and medium enterprises, promoting resolution over liquidation of corporate debtor by lowering the voting threshold of committee of creditors and streamlining provisions relating to eligibility of resolution applicants.
- **The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Act, 2018** notified on 17.08.2018 has replaced IBC (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018.

NATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING AUTHORITY

- **In the wake of accounting scams** and frauds in the corporate sector, National Financial Reporting authority (NFRA) was notified as an independent regulator for auditing profession which is one of the key changes brought in by the Companies Act 2013.
- **NFRA will review** the quality of corporate financial reporting in certain classes and subclasses of companies and take disciplinary action against auditors/audit firms for not discharging their statutory duties with due diligence.
- **The decision** is expected to result in higher foreign/domestic investments, acceleration of economic growth while supporting greater globalization of business by conforming to international standards and assisting in the evolution of audit profession.
- **The jurisdiction** of NFRA for investigation of Chartered Accountants and their firms under section 132 of the Act would extend to listed companies and large unlisted public companies, the threshold for which shall be prescribed in the rules.
- **The Government** has constituted this Authority and has prescribed NFRA (Manner of Appointment and other Terms and Conditions of Service of Chairperson and Members) Rules, 2018 and NFRA Rules, 2018. Shri R. Sridharan and Dr. Prasenjit Mukherjee, have been appointed as Chairperson and Full time Member respectively of NFRA on 1st October, 2018.
- **Rules Under sub-section (2) and (4) of Section 132** of the Companies Act, 2013, the Ministry vide Notification GSR No. 1111(E) dated 13th November, 2018 notified the National Financial Reporting Authority Rules, 2018.

E-GOVERNANCE

- **To provide for faster** and transparent processes, the MCA took the following major initiatives towards Ease of Doing Business and standardisation:

- **Introduction of "RUN – Reserve Unique Name" web service for name:** Introduced a web base service name as "RUN – Reserve Unique Name" for making the "Name Reservation" process Speedy, Smooth, Simple and reducing the number of procedures with effective from 26th January 2018 for Companies and from 2nd October 2018 for LLPs (Limited Liability Partnership).
- **Re-engineering the process of allotment of DIN:** Re-engineering the process of allotment of DIN by allotting it through the combined SPICe form only at the time of an individual's appointment as Director (in case he/she doesn't have a DIN).
- **Exemption of MCA fee for company incorporation:** A Government process of Re-engineering has been implemented where zero fee for incorporation of all companies with authorized capital upto Rs10 lakh or those companies with no share capital but have upto 20 members.
- **Deployment of e-forms** due to IFSC & exemption notifications, amendment to Companies Act, CRL-1, implementation of Condonation of Delay Scheme (CODS): 16 e-form changes were deployed on account of IFSC notification related changes, Exemption notification related changes, and Companies Act amendment along with deployment of CRL-01 (Information to the Registrar by company regarding the number of layers of subsidiaries) and CODS 2018 in the month of Feb-Mar '2018.
- **eKYC drive for directors** of all companies: MCA has introduced a mandatory eform viz. DIR-3 KYC for all DIN holders who have been allotted DIN on or before 31st March 2018 and whose DIN is in approved status. This drive is aimed at verification of individual DIN holders and weed out non-existent/dummy DIN holders and ultimately to clean up the Directors' e-Registry.
- **The KYC process** is obtaining additional details such as AADHAAR, Passport, personal Mobile Number and personal E-mail ID. Further, for stakeholders who do not possess AADHAAR, an exception management is provided. There are around 33 Lakh DINs in the registry and around 15.88 Lakh DIN holders have filed DIR KYC as on 30th November, 2018. In this drive, MCA managed to seed 11 lakh Aadhar card holders. This is one of its kinds of drive carried out anywhere in India.
- **Integrated form for LLP (FiLLiP)** incorporation: Introduction of a new integrated Form christened FiLLiP (Form for incorporation of Limited Liability Partnership) replacing the erstwhile Form 2 (Incorporation document and subscriber's statement) combining therein 3 services of name reservation, allotment of Designated Partner Identification Number (DPIN/DIN) and incorporation of the LLP.
- **Setting up Central Registration Centre (CRC)** for "name reservation" and "incorporation" for LLPs: CRC for "Name Reservation" and "Incorporation" of Companies has been successfully implemented. As operation of CRC has been stabilised, since past two years, Ministry has taken up similar GPR exercise for "Name Reservation" and "Incorporation" for LLPs (Limited Liability Partnership) and brought under the operation of CRC.
- **The Government** Process Re-engineering (GPR) exercise is in pursuance of the ministry's objective of providing greater "Ease of Doing Business" to all stakeholders and has resulted in speedier processing of incorporation related applications, uniformity in application of rules, and eradicating discretion.

NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL

- **To speed up** matter related to resolution of bankruptcy and insolvency, MCA proposed setting up 8 special courts under the National Company Law Tribunal to deal with the insolvency cases.
- **These courts** are proposed to be set up in Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad. The proposal aims to reduce the mounting burden on the tribunal despite it having 11 benches all over India.
- **To facilitate** timely resolution of IBC cases, it is envisaged to set up exclusive IBC Courts under the NCLT benches of Delhi, Mumbai to start with and step up infrastructure of NCLT.
- **The aim** is also to strengthen the insolvency process for faster resolution of NPAs.

INDIAN ACCOUNTING STANDARDS

- **In order** to bring more transparent accounting, MCA has notified Indian Accounting Standard (Ind AS) 115 which would be effective from 1st April 2018.
- **Ind AS 115** is a new revenue recognition standard for customer contracts in line with the International Financial Reporting Standards which will help in more transparent accounting of revenues with an impact on companies operating in diverse sectors, including technology, real estate and telecom.

- **Objective of Ind AS 115** is to establish the principles that should be applied when reporting useful information to users of financial statements.
- **The standard** requires an entity to recognize revenue "to depict the transfer of promised goods or services to customers in an amount that reflects the consideration to which the entity expects to be entitled in exchange for those goods or services"

DEMATERIALISATION OF SECURITIES OF UNLISTED PUBLIC COMPANIES

- **In order** to bring about greater transparency in Corporate structure and in view of advantages of dematerialisation of securities, especially in terms of KYC and investor protection, the Government's focus on "Digital India" and the enabling provisions available under section 29(1)(b) of the CA-13, the Ministry has amended the relevant rules to apply the dematerialisation requirements to unlisted public companies, in addition to listed companies.
- **Consultation** were held in this regard with all stakeholders and rules were amended on 10th September, 2018 to mandate, w.e.f. 2nd October, 2018, issue and transfer of securities by unlisted public companies in demat form only.

INVESTOR EDUCATION & PROTECTION FUND

- **The Investor Education & Protection Fund (IEPF)** Authority unveiled its new logo in 2018 to provide for strong brand presence and recognition. The IEPF authority also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the CSC e-governance Services India, wherein the latter would identify village level entrepreneurs for investor awareness projects, among other activities. MCA is actively looking at further reforms in IEPF.
- **To review the** existing claim settlement processes a committee of practicing company secretaries was constituted through the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI). The committee had reviewed the existing processes and have recommended that the entire process should be made online with e-verification of the claims by the companies, online PAN based verification of the claimant etc.
- **A new portal** namely www.iepfportal.in has been developed for increasing the outreach of IAPs and monitoring the programmes conducted by the professional institutes, CSC e-governance and other partner institutions. The portal provides access to the partner institutions like ICAI, ICSI, ICAI& IICA and CSC e-Governance for uploading the details of past & future programmes.

COMPETITION MATTERS:

- **COMPETITION MATTERS:** To enlarge the scope of debate of competition in India and to bring the best practices from around the world on competition issues, Competition Commission of India (CCI) successfully hosted the 17th International Competition Network (ICN) Annual Conference in March 2018 in New Delhi. Around 500 professional attended the conference from 70 plus countries, which included heads of competition agencies, representatives and stakeholders consisting of legal and economic professionals, international organizations and academics.
- **The MCA** constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee for carrying out "Competition Assessment of existing policies" under the chairmanship of Shri. Ramesh Abhishek, Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion with representation from seven other Ministries/Organizations on dated 1st June, 2018. The prime focus of the Committee was to conduct a review of select Acts/Rules/Policies/Regulations formulated in the recent past and some upcoming acts to look into issues of anti-competition aspects and to focus on any restrictions/provisions in laws that pose great threat to competition.
- **Further**, in pursuance of its objective to ensure that legislation is in sync with the needs of strong economic fundamentals, the Government constituted a Competition Law Review Committee under Shri Injeti Srinivas, Secretary Corporate Affairs on dated 1st October, 2018. The Committee is mandated to review the Competition Act/Rules/Regulation, to look into international best practices and sectoral interfaces etc.
- **Competition** Commission of India (CCI) has amended the Combination Regulations. The post amendment regulations among others includes permitting withdrawal of notice and refilling the same by parties, allowing submission of voluntary modifications in response to notice, appointing agencies to supervise implementation of modification etc.

- **As part** of competition Advocacy initiative at national and state level, CCI organised Roadshows in Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad, including a National Conference on "Public procurement and Competition Law." Similar Roadshows with focus on competition matters are being held periodically and more are planned to be held in the coming months.
- **Motion of thanks to President's Address** What is "Motion of Thanks" and what it contains? The President makes an address to a joint sitting of Parliament at the start of the Budget session, which is prepared by the government and lists its achievements. It is essentially a statement of the legislative and policy achievements of the government during the preceding year and gives a broad indication of the agenda for the year ahead.
- **The address** is followed by a motion of thanks moved in each House by ruling party MPs. During the session, political parties discuss the motion of thanks also suggesting amendments.
- **Amendments to the "Motion of Thanks"**: Notices of amendments to Motion of Thanks on the President's Address can be tabled after the President has delivered his Address. Amendments may refer to matters contained in the Address as well as to matters, in the opinion of the member, the Address has failed to mention. Amendments can be moved to the Motion of Thanks in such form as may be considered appropriate by the Speaker.
- **Limitations**: The only limitations are that members cannot refer to matters which are not the direct responsibility of the Central Government and that the name of the President cannot be brought in during the debate since the Government and not the President is responsible for the contents of the Address.
- **Provisions governing them**: President's Address and Motion of Thanks are governed by Articles 86 (1) and 87 (1) of the Constitution and Rules 16 to 24 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.
- **Its passage**: Members of Parliament vote on this motion of thanks. This motion must be passed in both of the houses. A failure to get motion of thanks passed amounts to defeat of government and leads to collapse of government. This is why, the Motion of Thanks is deemed to be a no-confidence motion.
- **Constitutional provisions on this**: Article 86(1) of the Constitution provides that the President may address either House of Parliament or both Houses assembled together, and for that purpose require the attendance of members.
- **Article 87** provides for the special address by the President. Clause (1) of that article provides that at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the House of the People and at the commencement of the first session of each year, the President shall address both Houses of Parliament assembled together and inform Parliament of the causes of its summons. No other business is transacted till the President has addressed both Houses of Parliament assembled together.

Small Grants Programme(SGP)

- **About Small Grants Programme (SGP)**: Global Environment Facility GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) provides financial and technical support to communities and Civil Society Organizations to meet the overall objective of global environmental benefits secured through community-based initiatives and actions.
- **It was launched in 1992 with 33 participating countries**. The Program is specifically designed to mobilize bottom-up actions by empowering local civil society organizations, and poor and vulnerable communities, including women and Indigenous Peoples.
- **How it functions?** Through a decentralized, national-level delivery mechanism, SGP finances community-led initiatives to address global environmental issues. It is currently implemented by UNDP on behalf of the GEF partnership.
- **The Programme** funds grants up to a maximum of \$50,000. In practice, the average grant has been around \$25,000. In addition, the SGP provides a maximum of \$150,000 for strategic projects. These larger projects allow for scaling up and cover a large number of communities within a critical landscape or seascape.
- **Significance**: Community-driven and civil society-led initiatives can generate environmental benefits, while supporting sustainable livelihoods, gender equality and civil society empowerment. These are actions needed at the local and regional level to address global environmental challenges and complement other areas where the GEF works.
- **Need for SGP**: Environment degradation such as the destruction of ecosystems and the species that depends upon them, increasing level of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, pollution of international waters, land degradation and the spread of persistent organic pollutants are life – threatening challenges that endanger us all. However, it is the poor and vulnerable communities that are most at risk as they are directly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods and subsistence. SGP aims to support these vulnerable communities through community led approaches towards environmental conservation and livelihoods enhancement.

- **The event** was organised under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas to encourage, motivate as well as felicitate all frontline field force for their outstanding contribution to PMUY. The occasion also saw the launch of the PMUY anthem – Ujjwala Bharat Ujjwala – composed and developed by eminent singer and film industry personality Padma Shri Kailash Kher.
- **About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:** Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.
- **Who is eligible?** Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.
- **Identification of households:** Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- **Key objectives of the scheme are:** Empowering women and protecting their health. Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
- **Reducing** the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel. Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.
- **What makes LPG adoption necessary?** A large section of Indians, especially women and girls, are exposed to severe household air pollution (HAP) from the use of solid fuels such as biomass, dung cakes and coal for cooking. A report from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare places HAP as the second leading risk factor contributing to India's disease burden.
- **According** to the World Health Organization, solid fuel use is responsible for about 13% of all mortality and morbidity in India (measured as Disability-Adjusted Life Years), and causes about 40% of all pulmonary disorders, nearly 30% of cataract incidences, and over 20% each of ischemic heart disease, lung cancer and lower respiratory infection.
- **Way ahead:** The PMUY is a bold and much-needed initiative, but it should be recognised that this is just a first step. The real test of the PMUY and its successor programmes will be in how they translate the provision of connections to sustained use of LPG or other clean fuels such as electricity or biogas. Truly smokeless kitchens can be realized only if the government follows up with measures that go beyond connections to actual usage of LPG. This may require concerted efforts cutting across Ministries beyond petroleum and natural gas and including those of health, rural development and women and child welfare.

River Information System

- **About RIS:** What is it? It is a combination of modern tracking equipment related hardware and software designed to optimize traffic and transport processes in inland navigation.
- **RIS is being** implemented under the overall responsibility of Inland Waterway Authority of India, a statutory body administered by the Ministry of Shipping.
- **The system** enhances swift electronic data transfer between mobile vessels and shore (Base stations) through advance and real-time exchange of information.
- **This would facilitate:** Enhancement of inland navigation safety in ports and rivers. Better use of the inland waterways. Environmental protection.
- **RIS enables achievement of safe and efficient inland water transport by avoiding the following risks:** Ship- to – Ship collisions. Ship – Bridge collisions. Groundings

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

- **What is it?** The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (or simply the Global Fund) is an international financing organization that aims to “attract, leverage and invest additional resources to end the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to support attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations.”

- **Founded** in 2002, the Global Fund is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and people affected by the diseases. The organization maintains its secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Historical background:** The Global Fund was formed as an independent, non-profit foundation under Swiss law and hosted by the World Health Organization in January 2002. In January 2009, the organization became an administratively autonomous organization, terminating its administrative services agreement with the World Health Organization.

Macedonia signs accord to join NATO

- **To acquire** full membership, all 29 current members must ratify the accession protocol.
- **Why is Russia worried about these developments?** Russia has raised concerns against Macedonia becoming part of NATO. Russia has always accused NATO of destabilising the Balkans by pushing Macedonia and Montenegro to join NATO.
- **Russia** sees Balkan nations as its sphere of influence and is against NATO or any other body led by US or EU making inroads to these Balkan countries. Russia is mainly concerned because NATO's membership provides a guarantee of mutual defence, provides a welcome insurance policy against possible incursions. Russia perceives this as an attempt by the west to contain it by making inroads to the areas which Russia considers its sphere of influence.
- **About North Atlantic Treaty Organization (North Atlantic Alliance):** It is an intergovernmental military alliance. Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949. Headquarters — Brussels, Belgium. Headquarters of Allied Command Operations — Mons, Belgium. Significance: It constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.
- **Objectives:** Political – NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.
- **Military** – NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO's founding treaty – Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations.

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)

- **Context:** The Union Home Ministry has banned the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for promoting terrorism and radicalising and recruiting youth for terrorist activities in India. Set up in the 1990s, TuM claims to be fighting for the "liberation of Kashmir."
- **About the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA):** This law is aimed at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India. Its main objective is to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India. The Act makes it a crime to support any secessionist movement or to support claims by a foreign power to what India claims as its territory. The UAPA, framed in 1967, has been amended twice since: first in 2008 and then in 2012.
- **The law is contested for few draconian provisions:** The Act introduces a vague definition of terrorism to encompass a wide range of non-violent political activity, including political protest. It empowers the government to declare an organisation as 'terrorist' and ban it. Mere membership of such a proscribed organisation itself becomes a criminal offence.
- **It allows** detention without a chargesheet for up to 180 days and police custody can be up to 30 days. It creates a strong presumption against bail and anticipatory bail is out of the question. It creates a presumption of guilt for terrorism offences merely based on the evidence allegedly seized.
- **It authorises** the creation of special courts, with wide discretion to hold in-camera proceedings (closed-door hearings) and use secret witnesses but contains no sunset clause and provisions for mandatory periodic review.

Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative:

- **What is it?** Launched by the US, it is an effort aimed at helping 50 million women in the developing world get ahead economically over the next six years.
- **It is a government** wide project led by the senior adviser and daughter to President Donald Trump- Ivanka Trump. The initiative will involve the State Department, the National Security Council and other agencies. It aims to coordinate current programs and develop new ones to assist women in areas such as job training, financial support, and legal or regulatory reforms.
- **It seeks** to reach 50 million women in the developing world by 2025 through U.S. government activities, private-public partnerships, and a new, innovative fund at USAID.
- **Kerala to get country's 2nd longest rail tunnel:** What is it? A 10.7-km railway line, including a 9.02-km tunnel, has been proposed to connect the upcoming Vizhinjam International Multipurpose Deepwater Seaport to the railway network.
- **The 9.02-km tunnel**, mooted by Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd (KRCL), will be the second longest railway tunnel in the country. The 11.26-km Pir Panjal rail tunnel, connecting Banihal and Hillar Shahabad, is the longest.

LAIRCM Self-Protection Suites:

- **Context:** US has approved a foreign military sale to India — two 777 Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) Self-Protection Suites (SPS), for an estimated \$190 million.
- **What is it? Significance?** LAIRCM is a programme meant to protect large aircraft from man-portable missiles. It increases crew-warning time, decreases false alarm rates and automatically counters advanced infrared missile systems.
- **These systems** will protect two Boeing-777 Head-of-State aircraft. This would bring the security of Air India One at par with that of Air Force One, the aircraft used by the American President.
- **It consists** of missile warning sensors (MWS), a laser transmitter assembly, control interface unit (CIU) and processors to detect, track, jam and counter incoming infrared missiles.
- **Dard Aryans:** Why in News? A seminar was held recently in New Delhi that extensively discussed the need to preserve the legacy of Dard Aryans. Who are they? Some 200 km from Leh are the villages of Dha, Hanu, Garkone and Darchik on both sides of the Indus River, inhabited by the Buddhist Dard Tribes. The villages are together called the "Aryan valley". The word 'Dard' is derived from a Sanskrit word, 'Daradas', which means people who live on hillsides.
- **They might** have descended from soldiers in Alexander's army who had come to the region over 2,000 years ago. The Dard Aryans, however, do not document their history. These tribals are mainly dependent on agriculture.
- **Threats and the need for their protection:** There is a threat to the heritage of the community owing to modernisation, migration and religious conversion. The community now numbers about 4,000. Over the last few decades, many of them have embraced Islam or Buddhism.
- **The community** prohibits marriage with outsiders to keep the gene pool intact. Of late, the Dard men have been migrating to other parts of the region (in search of livelihood) and marrying outside the tribe. The tribe is struggling to find a balance between modernity and traditional values.

Reservations to Economically Weaker Sections and the Basic Structure:

- **The editorial discusses** about the recently announced reservation for the economically weaker sections of the society, provisions in the constitution, how it seeks to alter the basic structure, is it justified and analysis of its passage.
- **What's the issue?** A 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions to the economically weaker sections (EWS) among the upper castes, or those who are not covered under any reservation plan has been announced.
- **Who are weaker sections? As per the reform, EWS is defined as:** Families with income (includes agricultural income as well as from profession) below Rs 8 lakh per annum. In rural areas, such families who own agricultural land below five acre and residential house below 1,000 square feet and in urban areas, those with residential plot below 100 yards in notified municipality or residential plot below 200 yards in the non-notified municipal area will be considered as

part of this category.

- **How it seeks to amend the Constitution?** It seeks to amend Articles 15 and 16 to enable Parliament and all states to make “special provisions” for the advancement of “any economically weaker sections” of citizens (EWS).
- **What is basic structure doctrine?** Starting from Sajjan Singh case in 1964, basic structure doctrine was evolved by the Supreme Court of India. It found a solid ground in Kesavananda Bharati case. As per the doctrine, the constitution of India has certain basic features which cannot be altered or abrogated.
- **The court did not define this**, and only listed a few principles — federalism, secularism, democracy — as being part of basic structure. Since then, the court has been adding new features to the concept of basic structure. In subsequent years, courts extended the doctrine even to ordinary legislation and executive actions.
- **How the latest reservation policy affects the basic structure of the constitution?** It is said that the new law violates the basic structure of the constitution.
- **Following are the issues:** It violates the landmark Mandal judgment capping reservations at 50%. The constitution talks about only social backwardness (Article 15(4) and Article 16(4)) and nothing about economic backwardness. Moreover, the Constitution makes provisions for commissions to look into matters relating to implementation of constitutional safeguards for Scheduled Castes (Article 338), Scheduled Tribes (338A) and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (339), but has not created any commission for the economically backward classes.
- **Govt’s defence:** The 124th Amendment mentions Article 46 in its statement and objects. Article 46, which is a non-justiciable Directive Principle, says that the state shall promote educational and economic interests of “weaker sections”, in particular SCs and STs, and protect them from “social injustices” and “all forms of exploitation”.
- **What lies ahead for the govt?** To determine this, the Supreme Court has to examine the principles on which affirmative action is based. As per M Nagaraj (2006), it would have to apply two tests.
- **One is the width test**, on the boundaries of the amending power. This would include examination of four issues — quantitative limitations such as violation of the 50% ceiling for all reservations taken together; (ii) exclusion of creamy layer or qualitative exclusion; (iii) compelling reasons such as backwardness of the economically weaker sections for whom this reservation has been made; (iv) that overall administrative efficiency is not obliterated by the new reservation.
- **The second test** is called the identity test, under which the Supreme Court will examine whether, after the amendment, there is any alteration in the identity of the Constitution. The amendment cannot change this.
- **Conclusion:** It is clear from the Constitution that reservation can be for a caste or a class. In fact, caste is a social class and cannot be for individuals; the latest move has made it for the individual. Similarly, the government has to justify “compelling reasons” of going beyond the 50% limit. In some states, upper castes number less than 10% and this scheme may be difficult to justify as for 52% backward classes there is just 27% OBC reservation.

UPSC = Fever



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Ministry of Women & Child Development -Year End Review 2018

- POSHAN Abhiyaan, PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment launched** Enhancement of honorarium of anganwadi workers/helpers New initiatives to strengthen Gender Budgeting *279 OSCs operational, over 1.93 Lakh women supported * * More than 65.20 Lakh beneficiaries enrolled under MMMVY* * Mahila E-haat grows impacting over 32000 women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs and over 7.34 lakh beneficiaries.* *723 Child Welfare Committees and 702 Juvenile Justice Boards have been set up across the country*
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** Beti Bachao Beti Padhao is one the flagship programmes of the Government. It is a tri-ministerial, convergent effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development with focus on Awareness and Advocacy Campaign; Multi-sectoral action in select 405 districts (low on CSR) and Alert Media & Advocacy outreach in 235 districts; Effective enforcement of Pre-Conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act and Enabling girls' education.
- The scheme** is envisaged to bring an improvement in Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) in the short term while Child Sex Ratio (CSR) with manifestation of over-all development such as improved health & nutrition, gender parity in education, better sanitation, opportunities and removal of asymmetries between the genders is endeavored in the long term.
- The programme** is going to complete in 4 years and in this short span of time, the clarion call of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao is resonating across the country. This programme has been successful in establishing improvement in CSR as a National Agenda. It has stirred national consciousness with the political leadership and Government, both at the Central and States/UTs level owning the initiative. Several innovative interventions have been demonstrated on ground in the selected districts. The awareness and advocacy campaign and multi-sectoral action in districts has resulted in increased awareness, sensitization and conscious building around the issue of declining CSR in the public domain.
- Encouraging trends** are visible as per the latest HIMS data of MoHFW for 161 BBBP districts for the time period between April-March, 2015-16 & 2016-17 indicating that, an improving trend in Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) is visible in 104 districts, 119 districts have reported progress in first trimester registration against the reported Anti Natal Care registrations and 146 districts have reported improvement in institutional deliveries. In addition, as per Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) 2015-16, the girl's enrolment in secondary education has increased to 80.97% against 76% in 2013-14. Construction of girl's toilets in every school in selected districts has been achieved.
- Based on the successful implementation** in 161 districts, the Government has expanded coverage of BBBP which included Multi-sectoral intervention in 244 districts in addition to existing 161 districts, where physical implementation of the scheme is happening under the leadership of Collector/DM/DC. The District Level Centre for Women (DLCW) under Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) Scheme provides foothold for BBBP Scheme in the district. At the state level, the State Task Force headed by the Chief Secretary will provide overall guidance for implementation of scheme. 235 districts are to be covered through Alert District Media, Advocacy and Outreach, thus covering all the 640 districts (as per census 2011) of the Country to have a deeper positive impact on Child Sex Ratio.

Women Welfare

- One Stop Centre:-** Many women who face violent crimes do not know where to go for support. For them, One Stop Centres (OSCs) have been set up across the country. The scheme of One Stop Centres was initiated in March 2015 for facilitating access to an integrated range of services including police, medical, legal, psychological support and temporary shelter to women affected by violence. The Scheme is funded through Nirbhaya Fund.
- OSCs are set being** set up in a phased manner in all the districts of the country. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India has already given approval to State Governments and Union Territory Administrations for setting up of One Stop Centres in all the 718 districts of the country. So far, 279 OSCs have become operational. These centres have offered support to over 1.93 Lakh women.

- **Women Helpline:-** The Scheme of Universalization of Women Helpline is being implemented since 1st April 2015 and is intended to provide 24 hours emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence through referral (linking with appropriate authority such as police, One Stop Centre, hospital) and information about women related government schemes/programmes across the country through a single uniform number (181). So far, women helplines have become operational in 32 States/UTs. They have managed more than 20.23 lakh calls of women. The Scheme is funded through Nirbhaya Fund.
- **Sexual Harassment at Workplace:-** The Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 covers all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and protects them against sexual harassment at all workplaces whether organized or unorganized. Students, apprentices, labourers, domestic workers and even women visiting an officer are included in the Act.
- **In order to ensure the effective implementation of the Act,** MWCD has developed an online complaint management system titled Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box) for registering complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace. SHe-Box portal offers the facility of making online complaints of sexual harassment at workplace to all women employees in the country, including all government and private employees.
- **To create widespread awareness about the Act** across the country, both in organized and unorganized sector, MWCD has identified a pool of 223 resource institutions to provide capacity building programs i.e. trainings, workshops etc. on the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace. SHe-Box also provides a platform to these empanelled institutes/organisations to share their capacity building activities with the Ministry which in turn will be able to monitor the activities of these institutes/organizations so empanelled from across the country. In the year 2018, these empanelled institutes had organised more than 744 capacity building exercises attended by more than 50,000 people.
- **iv) Child Marriage:-** The Ministry has been taking action to end the practice of child marriage. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 punishes those who promote, perform and abet child marriage. The Government of India proposes to amend "The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006". The proposed amendments would declare child marriage void ab initio instead of being voidable at the option of the contracting parties who were child at the time of marriage.
- **v) Training of Elected Women Representatives:-** The Ministry has taken up the training of elected women representatives (EWRs) in panchayats to empower them to govern their villages effectively and develop into grassroots changemakers. First phase of the training (2017-18) trained 18,578 EWRs covering 414 Districts across 14 States. The second phase (started in Sept, 2018) is to train 13,950 EWRs covering 310 Districts across 19 States. The programme aims at improving the leadership qualities and managements skills of EWRs for better implementation of various schemes, impart knowledge on important legislations and monitor asset creation and public works.
- **vi) Grievance Redressal Cell:-** The Grievance Redressal Cell of the Ministry deals with the online grievances that are received on issues related to women and children. Citizens can send in complaints to min-wcd@nic.in for a prompt response. The above system is working very effectively as it helps in prompt action and regular follow-up. The cell has processed close to 39,347 complaints in the one year since its inception.

Gender Budgeting (GB)

- **i. Women face various** forms of vulnerability and discrimination throughout their life cycle. It was recognized that budgets are an important way to significantly reduce these vulnerabilities. Under the scheme of Gender Budgeting (GB), steps are being taken to ensure the institutionalisation of GB from policy formulation to outcome achievement in the Centre and across State Governments. The scheme has three main focus areas: Advocacy and guidance to Gender Budget Cells; Training and capacity building of stakeholders; and Facilitating Gender Budget analysis and performance audit. Under this Scheme, MWCD provides financial support to Central/ State Government Institutes for imparting training to different stakeholders to strengthen the process of gender budgeting. In the last three financial years, MWCD has supported over 180 training programmes.
- **Through the Ministry's** continuous efforts 57 Central Ministries and Departments have formed Gender Budgeting Cells. Also, 21 State Governments have designated State Nodal Centres responsible for imparting training to Government Stakeholders on Gender Budgeting.
- **MWCD has been involved** in ensuring that public resources in the form of budgets are earmarked adequately towards addressing women's concerns. In the year 2018-19, 33 Ministries/Departments and Union Territories have reported on the same, accounting for Rupees 1, 21,961.32 Crores (4.99%) of the total Union Budget.
- **MWCD has been strengthening** internal and external capacities on Gender Budgeting within the Centre and across States through collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Finance, NITI Aayog at the institutional level and with NIFM at the level of capacity building. Several consultations have been organised in the year 2018-19 with officers of various Central Ministries/Departments and State Governments on strengthening the mechanisms and processes of budgeting for women. As a way forward, MWCD will have continued engagement with NITI Aayog, Ministry of Finance and other key Ministries as well as Government Level Institutions to strengthen the existing mechanisms and create additional mechanisms and tools of gender budgeting for advancing women's rights and promoting gender equality.

Scheme for Adolescent Girls:

- **Government is implementing** Scheme for Adolescent Girls to improve the nutritional and health status of out of school adolescent girls of age 11-14 years and to upgrade their skills. In addition to providing nutritional support to the adolescent girls, the scheme aims to motivate out of school girls to go back to formal schooling/ skill training. The Scheme has been extended to all the districts of the country with effect from 01.04.2018.
- **For the year 2018-19, budget** allocation of Rs. 500 crore has been earmarked for the Scheme. As of now, Rs. 136.25 crore has been released under the scheme benefiting nearly 6.9 lakh beneficiaries as reported by the States/UTs.

SWADHAR GREH

- **The Ministry has constructed** a Home for Widows namely Krishna Kutir at Vrindavan, Distt. Mathura with a capacity of 1000 beds to provide safe and secure place of stay, health services, nutritious food, legal and counseling services to widows. Krishna Kutir was inaugurated on 31.08.2018 by Shri Adityanath Yogi, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in the presence of Smt Maneka Gandhi, Minister of Women and Child Development.
- **Krishna Kutir, Home for Widows** at Vrindavan has started benefiting the widows and an amount of Rs. 1.57 crores has been released to the State Government of Uttar Pradesh for running of Krishna Kutir for the period 01.09.2018 to 31.03.2019.

UJJWALA SCHEME

- **As on date the total number** of projects under Ujjwala Scheme is 270 which include 141 Rehabilitation Homes. A total amount of Rs. 5.24 Crores is released to 9 states including Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana as grant for 1st instl of year 2018-19 and pending grant of years 2016-17 and 2017-18 based on their Utilization certificate and other supporting documents.

POSHAN Abhiyaan

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan** PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment was formally launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister on 8th March, 2018 from Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.
- **i. POSHAN Abhiyaan** aims to reduce mal-nutrition from the Country in a phased manner, through the life cycle concept, by adopting a synergised and result oriented approach. The Abhiyaan ensure mechanisms for timely service delivery and a robust monitoring as well as intervention infrastructure. Target of Abhiyaan is to bring down stunting of the children in the age group of 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by the year 2022. More than 10 crore people will be benefitted by this programme.
- **ii. 315 districts** were covered in Financial Year 2017-18, the remaining districts have been covered in 2018-19. **iii.** Three meetings of the National Council under the chairmanship of Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog and four meetings of Executive Committee under the chairmanship of Secretary, MWCD already held during the year.
- **iv. Funds amounting** to ₹ 2122.27 crore have been released to States/UTs in FY 2017-18 and 2018-19. **v.** September 2018 has been celebrated as the Rashtriya Poshan Maah across the Country. The field level efforts were recognised through an Awards Ceremony on 10th October 2018.
- **vi. POSHAN Abhiyaan** ensures convergence with various programmes i.e Anganwadi Services, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Scheme for Adolescent Girls of WCD Ministry; Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), National Health Mission (NHM) of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Swachh Bharat Mission of Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation (DW&S); Public Distribution System (PDS) of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (CAF&PD); Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) of Ministry of Rural Development (M/o RD); Drinking Water & Toilets with Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Bodies through Ministry of Urban Development.
- **vii. One of the key** activities of Abhiyaan is implementation of ICDS-Common Application Software. As on 30th November, 2018, ICDS-CAS has been rolled-out in 64 districts across 9 States/UTs. Anganwadi workers feed the information regarding the services delivered, through the mobile devices installed with ICDS-CAS application. Information entered by the AWWs is visible on the dashboard that can be accessed at Block, District, State and National Level at www.icds-

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

- **The Hon'ble Prime Minister**, on 31st December, 2016, had announced Pan-India implementation of Maternity Benefit Programme to eligible pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- **The programme was approved** by the Cabinet on 17.05.2017 for pan-India implementation with effect from 01.01.2017. The administrative approval was conveyed to all States/UTs for implementation of the Scheme on 19.05.2017 i.e. immediately after approval of the Cabinet. The Programme has since been named as Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY).
- **PMMVY is a Centrally Sponsored** Scheme under which the grant-in-aid is being released to States/UTs in cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature 60:40, for North-Eastern States & Himalayan States it will be 90:10 and 100% for Union Territories without Legislature.
- **The Scheme envisages providing** cash incentive amounting to ₹5,000/- directly to the Bank/Post Office Account of PW&LM in DBT Mode during pregnancy and lactation in response to individual fulfilling specific conditions as detailed below:
- **The eligible beneficiaries** would receive the remaining cash incentive as per approved norms towards Maternity Benefit under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) after institutional delivery so that on an average, a women will get ₹6,000/-
- **The Scheme Implementation Guidelines**, the software for roll out of the Scheme i.e. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana - Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS) and its User Manual have been launched on 01.09.2017 by the Hon'ble Minister (WCD). The further details are available on wcd.nic.in. As on date, more than 65.20 Lakh beneficiaries have been enrolled under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana out of which more than 55.69 Lakh beneficiaries have been paid. A total of ₹ 18,47,35,02,000 funds have been disbursed to the beneficiaries.
- **The Ministry celebrated the first anniversary** of launch of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana as "Matru Vanadana Saptah" during first week of September, 2018 (1st to 7th September, 2018) at each State/ District level. During the Matru Vandana Saptah, States/ UTs were requested to take up various activities emphasizing on scope of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities. The Saptah concluded with a National event which majorly concentrated on recognition of high performing states/ Uts and Districts of the country with respect to the achievements under PMMVY. Various Review meetings cum Workshops have been organised under PMMVY across all States/ UTs to review the progress of the scheme across the country.
- **So far**, ₹ 2,04,859.25 Lakh in FY 2017-18 and ₹ 43,098.50 Lakh in FY 2018-19 (Up to 02.01.2019) to all 36 States/UTs have been sanctioned under PMMVY.

MEDIA

- **Print Media: As many as 14 advertisements** on various schematic interventions and events of the Ministry were published in prominent newspapers in Hindi, English and regional languages (till 22nd December, 2018).
- **Video Spots: Nine video spots** (45 seconds duration each) on social issues plaguing the society like domestic violence, sexual harassment, dowry prohibition, child marriage, and schemes undertaken by the Ministry like legal adoption, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and online portal Mahila e-haat were telecast. The spots were viewed through digital cinema and telecast through private TV channels, Lok Sabha TV and Doordarshan.
- **Audio Spots: To reach a wider audience**, seven audio spots of durations 35 seconds & 45 seconds were broadcast till November 2018, through BOC and Prasar Bharati over Pvt. FM channels and All India Radio. These spots would be telecast again over these channels. In a first, the Ministry has initiated Sponsored Radio Programme (SRP) to encourage people by narrating the lives and exemplary achievements of extraordinary women, who fought all odds to do the nation proud and serve society. This programme is disseminated through All India Radio. This programme was launched on 2nd November, 2018, and it is a series of 60 episodes.
- **Outdoor publicity: The Ministry** has also embarked on social messaging through LPG bills, IRCTC/Indian Railway meal kits, Air India boarding passes, Electricity Bills, Digital Display Boards, announcement at inter-state Bus Stands and Delhi Metro.
- **SMS Campaign: For higher accessibility** to the Ministry's schemes, a month-long campaign was undertaken in June with direct links of the various schemes of the Ministry being sent through SMS.

- **Social Media:** The Ministry effectively used its social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and YouTube with followers numbering in lakhs. This medium was leveraged to disseminate information on the various schemes and programmes of the Government so as to increase citizen engagement. To connect with netizens, numerous contests were hosted, wherein suggestions were sought and crowd sourcing was undertaken for various logos. This year, the Ministry initiated online campaigns like Back to School, Like You Do Maa, Yoga for 9 to 5, Childline 1098, Krishna Kutir, National Children Awards, Women Of India Organic Festival & Safe Neighbourhood. The Ministry's social media platforms also served as the nodal point of contact of grievances received online & coordinated the redressal system with the Ministry's Grievance Redressal Team, NCW & NCPDR through our #HelpMeWCD campaign. The Cell ensures that the Ministry is in line with the agenda and advocacy as undertaken by the Prime Minister's office and the Government of India.

Women of India Festivals:

- **The 'Women of India Festival'** is organised annually by the Ministry with the aim to encourage women entrepreneurs and farmers, and also actively promote organic products ranging from food and fabric to wellness and personal care. Women of India Organic Festival 2018 was held from 26th October to 4th November, 2018, at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi. The festival provided a national platform to nearly 570 participants from the remotest corners of the country at 287 stalls. In a first, the Ministry introduced organic and vegan food stalls, which were well received by the visitors. The festival highlighted the health and environmental advantages of organic goods, provided a platform for women engaged in this sector and encouraged the development of sustainable and easily accessible sales outlets for organic producers from remote areas. Radio jingles (4 in number) and print advertisement were also published for wider promotion. The 5th edition of the 10-day festival culminated on 4th November, 2018 (Sunday) at IGNA.
- **This year, the total sales** by the women farmers and entrepreneurs who came from 26 States were a record of over Rs. 2.75 crore in comparison to that of Rs. 1.84 crore in last year's edition that was organised at Dilli Haat, INA, New Delhi. The festival had a footfall of nearly 12 lakhs. The participants also had the opportunity to enroll themselves at Mahila e-Haat, which is an online marketing portal set-up by the Ministry to meet the aspirations and needs of women entrepreneurs.
- **Two more event of 'Women of India Organic Festival'** are going to be organised by Ministry of Women and Child Development in Chandigarh from 12th to 14th January, 2019 and in Hyderabad in February, 2019.
- **SATVIK: Like previous years, SATVIK Food Festival** has been organised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with SRISTI where Ministry has sponsored 50 stalls at Ahmedabad during 22nd to 25th December, 2018.

Information Technology:

- **The Ministry is using Information Technology** extensively for implementation of e-Governance in several schemes and initiatives. A brief description of some of the key achievements of Ministry in respect of IT division during the year of 2018 are as follows :
- **i. eOffice :** <https://mwcd.eoffice.gov.in> The Ministry has fully implemented eOffice Premium products and successfully migrated to paperless office concept for which the Ministry has been graded as Platinum Ministry by Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DAR&PG). MWCD tops the list in terms of number of -e-files and percentage of e-files (100%) among all Ministries with zero physical file. More than 49000 no of e-files has been created in the Ministry
- **ii. Implementation of GIGW for Ministry's official Website (www.wcd.nic.in)** Ministry has completed GIGW compliance for Ministry's Official Website (www.wcd.nic.in) and has obtained STQC certificate for GIGW compliance from STQC directorate, MeitY in respect of Ministry official Website (www.wcd.nic.in).
- **iii. Formulation of Cyber Security Policy:** Ministry is in the process of formulation of Cyber Security Policy keeping in view of the development of more and more IT application for providing service to the citizens through digital mode. Committee for the same has also been constituted in the Ministry.
- **iv. Mapping and Seeding of LGD Codes:** Local Government Directory (LGD) is a standard location code directory which assigns unique code to each revenue/land region entity such as State, Districts, Sub district, Block and village and to local bodies such as village panchayat, municipality, and to Department/organization units. Ministry has integrated various schemes with LGD codes and is in the process of integrating more of its e-Governance applications with the LGD Codes of the location of administrative units.
- **v. Uploading Services on National Government Service Portal:** Ministry's IT services (under G2C, G2E and G2B) are being uploaded on "National Government Service Portal (<https://services.india.gov.in>)" which is being designed to provide a single window portal for all Central and State/UT Government information and transaction services, under G2C, G2E and G2B.

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh

- **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)** is a society, registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860 and an apex micro-finance organization established in 1993 under the aegis of Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD) to meet the credit needs of poor and asset less women in the informal sector for various livelihood support and income generating activities at concessional terms in a client-friendly procedure to bring about their socio-economic development.
- **RMK's Corpus is at Rs 284 crore** as on 27th December, 2018 including reserves and surplus, utilized for extending micro credit at concessional rate of interest to women SHGs or individual women (the ultimate beneficiaries) through Intermediary Microfinancing Organizations (IMOs) /NGOs/ VOs. RMK is regulated by its Memorandum of Association and "Rules and Regulations". RMK has made a cumulative sanction of more than Rs.371.52 Crore and disbursement of Rs.307.72 Crore to nearly 7.40 lacs poor women beneficiaries through a network of over 1524 NGOs/IMOs as at December, 2018.
- **After the approval of Revised Loan Guidelines** of RMK, processing of loan proposals was expedited to clear all the pending loan proposals received from Intermediary Micro-financing Organisations (IMOs).
- **Totally three Small Loan Committee Meetings** were held in 2018 and 29 number of proposals amounting to Rs. 23 Crores were considered for sanction of loan. The Committee sanctioned 18 numbers of proposals of IMOs to the tune of Rs. 7.20 Crores during 2018.
- **The term of the Outreach Committee constituted** as on 21st December, 2017 for expanding the network of RMK and Mahila E-haat along with their capacity building was extended in July 2018 for a period of one year till June, 2019. RMK website has been revamped and redeveloped to meet the present needs of complying with GIGW guidelines and also to have fresh appearance.
- **RMK has been equipped with new networking equipment's** and further migrated from VPN connectivity to NICNET connectivity through Power Grid Corporation Ltd.. E-loaning System of RMK, developed by NIC, is live now. Through the E-Loan System, IMOs/ NGOs could submit their proposals through online and know the status of their application through internet. This will bring transparency in the loan sanction procedure of RMK.
- **Video Spots and Radio Jingles** on RMK & Mahila E-haat have been produced through NFDC during the year 2018 and has been disseminated through AIR, Pvt TV Channels etc.
- **Advertisement for inviting loan proposals** preferably from Women Led Organisations by RMK for on-lending to poor women entrepreneurs was published through DAVP. Also advertisements were released in Hindi/ English/ Regional & National Newspapers circulated in the states of UP, MP, WB, Bihar, UK, and North Eastern states through DAVP several times. During the year 2018, a total amount of Rs.2.07 Crores was recovered towards principal and Interest from IMOs.
- **Legal actions were initiated against the defaulting NGOs** and during 2018, 20 cases were filled under Sec. 138 of NI Act.; 167 cases of Execution of Decreed & Award in various states; 10 fresh Arbitration cases; 4 Suit file cases, and filling of FIR in 51 cases. Further during 2018, the office bearers of NGOs were convicted and sentenced by the Hon'ble Court in two cases under Section 138 of NI Act.
- **An Awareness Workshop on RMK Schemes was held on 27th September**, 2018 in Shillong, Meghalaya State to create awareness about the revised guidelines among officials concerned and also IMOs in the North Eastern States along with Awareness cum Sensitization workshop on Mahila E-haat. Orientation Training and Awareness cum Capacity Building Workshops to the partner IMOs was held from 10-11th Dec, 2018, 12-13th Dec, 2018 & 14-15th Dec, 2018 at NIPCCD, New Delhi. Participants from more than 30 IMOs are participated in the training organised by RMK.
- **RMK organized Swachata Abhiyan Pakhwada from 15th Sep. 2018** to 2nd Oct. 2018. Hindi Pakhwada was observed from 14th Sep. 2018 to 20th Sep. 2018 and various competitions were organised and prizes given to winners.

Mahila E-haat

- **On 7th March, 2016**, the Ministry of Women & Child Development launched "Mahila E-Haat", a unique direct online e- marketing platform to support Women entrepreneurs/SHGs/ NGOs. This is first of its kind direct online marketing platform for women to strengthen the socio-economic empowerment of women by way of mobilizing and providing avenue for their products & services.
- **This initiative of MWCD** is aimed at meeting the aspirations and needs of women entrepreneurs for showcasing the products made/manufactured/sold by Women entrepreneurs/NGOs/SHGs. The URL is :<http://mahilaehaat-rmk.gov.in>.
- **This online marketing platform** is facilitating direct contact between the vendors and buyers. The entire business of Mahila E-haat can be handled through a mobile, the buyers have the option of approaching the vendors physically, telephonically or through Email or any other means as convenient to him/her. Services Bulk repeat and customized orders can also be undertaken.
- **There are 18 broad categories** of products displayed on the portal, the Clothing, Fashion Accessories / Jewellery & Grocery & Staples / Organic.

- **Women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs** from 31 States / UTs are showcasing over 7000 products and services and impacting over 32000 women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs and over 7.34 lakh beneficiaries.
- **Awareness & sensitization workshops** are being organized with the vendors for skilling, capacity building, digital & financial literacy etc. at the grassroots level also being undertaken in different States. Workshops along with State Women Development Corporations have been held in New Delhi, Indore, Kochi, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Chhattisgarh, Hyderabad, Varanasi, Bhopal, Shillong till date and many more are proposed. An MoU has been signed with Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM) for collaboration and getting the products and services of their Women entrepreneurs/SHGs/NGOs to showcase on Mahila E-haat.

Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) Scheme

- **Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme** was approved as a centrally sponsored scheme for implementation from 2017-18 to 2019-20 to empower rural women through community participation and to create an environment in which they realize their full potential. It aims to provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements and also empowering them through training and capacity building. The scheme has been approved for implementation in 23 States /UTs namely: Andaman & Nicobar, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Daman & Diu, Dadra & NH, Gujarat, J&K, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
- **At the State/UT level, 26 State Resource Centres** for Women (SRCWs) are functional in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, J&K, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal to provide technical support to respective Departments of WCD/Social Welfare on issues related to women. At the district level, District Level Centre Women (DLCW) are being set up in 640 districts in a phased manner to collate information pertaining to government programmes, schemes and services meant for women including foothold to BBBP scheme. DLCWs are functional in 28 districts in 11 states/UTs.
- **Community engagement through College Student Volunteers** is envisioned in 115 most backward/aspirational districts as part of the Block Level initiatives. Student volunteers will cater to awareness about government schemes/programs, training and capacity building for empowerment of all rural women. Student volunteers have already been identified in 2 districts (Yadgir & Raichur) of Karnataka and 2 districts (Mahasamund & Rajnandgaon) of Chhattisgarh. In not more than 50 % of the MSKs to be set up in the district, the Block Level Committee will be assisted in the running of the MSK by an NGO for mobilizing women into collectives which will work towards greater self-employability through upping their skills.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS):

- **Construction of Anganwadi Centre (AWC) Buildings** under Anganwadi Services (under Umbrella ICDS Scheme) in convergence with MGNREGS:
- **Joint guidelines for construction** of 2 lakh Anganwadi Centre (AWC) buildings in most backward districts of 11 States (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh) by 2019 under MGNREGS in convergence with ICDS Scheme have been jointly issued by Ministry of Rural Development and WCD on 13.08.2015.
- **Taking into consideration the acute shortage** of AWC buildings (around 4.5 lakhs) in the country, the convergence scheme for construction of AWC buildings has been extended to all districts across the country and the target for construction of AWCs has been enhanced from 2 lakh to 4 lakh in the four years (by 2019). Revised Joint Guidelines have been signed between Ministry of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Women & Child Development on 17.02.2016 for construction of 4 lakh Anganwadi Buildings across the country in convergence with MGNREGS.
- **Under the revised Anganwadi Services**, provision of Rs. 12,000/- per AWC for construction of toilets in 70,000 Government owned AWCs buildings and Rs. 10,000/-per AWC for 20,000 AWCs for providing drinking water facilities have been made.
- **Drinking water and sanitation facilities** will be provided in these AWCs from the funds available with Panchayati Raj Institutions under 14th Finance Commission.
- **Construction of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) in CSR by Vedanta Foundation:** In pursuance of the meeting held in the Prime Minister's Office on 13.07.2015 on the proposal of Vedanta for construction of Anganwadi Centres through Corporate Social Responsibility, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between MWCD and M/s Vedanta on 21st September, 2015 for construction of the 4000 Anganwadi Centre buildings through its own resources primarily in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh. Out of the proposed 4000 AWC buildings, 269 AWC buildings[225 AWC buildings in Rajasthan, 39 AWC buildings in Uttar Pradesh, 5 AWC buildings in Madhya Pradesh] have been completed as per progress report (upto 30.11.2018) submitted by M/s Vedanta.

Convergence of Insurance Schemes:

- **Pursuant to the decision** of the Government to migrate existing insurance schemes to Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)/Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)/ Anganwadi Helpers (AWHs) in the age group of 18-50 years are covered under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) for life cover of ₹ 2.00 Lakh (covers life risk, death due to any reason), those in the age group of 18-59 years are covered under Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) for accidental cover of ₹ 2.00 Lakh (for accidental death and permanent full disability) / ₹ 1.00 Lakh (for partial but permanent disability) and those in the age group of 51-59 years are covered with the modified Anganwadi Karyakarti Bima Yojana (AKBY) for life cover of ₹ 30,000/- (covers life risk, death due to any reason). The migration is effective from 01.06.2017.
- **The AWWs/AWHs are also** provided Female Critical Illness benefits of ₹ 20,000/- on diagnosis of identified illness {invasive cancers (malignant tumour) manifest in the organs viz. Breast, Cervix Uteri, Corpus Uteri, Ovaries, Fallopian Tubes and Vaginal/vulva} (subject to proof of affliction satisfactory to LIC) and scholarships to their children studying in 9th to 12th Standard (including ITI courses). Scholarship of ₹ 300/- per quarter is available for two children per family. These social security benefits to AWWs/AWHs are being provided in association with the LIC. The cost of premium towards these social security benefits is borne by MoWCD and LIC. The State Governments/ UT Administrations or the AWWs/AWHs are not required to make any payment towards these social security benefits.
- **DBT onboarding of ICDS Scheme:** "With the aim of reforming Government delivery system by re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes for simpler and faster flow of benefits and services and to ensure accurate targeting of the beneficiaries, de-duplication and reduction of fraud, Government of India has started Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) using Aadhaar as the primary identifier of beneficiaries in its schemes. Use of Aadhaar ensures that benefits go to individuals' bank accounts electronically, minimizing tiers involved in fund flow and thereby reducing delay in payment, ensuring accurate targeting of the beneficiary and curbing pilferage and duplication.
- **In pursuance of directions** of the Government for implementation of DBT in its schemes, the Ministry of Women & Child Development is implementing 17 Schemes / Scheme Components in DBT mode for transfer of benefits and services directly to the beneficiary using Aadhaar as the primary identifier. Scheme specific Web-based Common Application Softwares (CAS) / Management Information Systems (MIS) have been developed and rolled out pan-India for capturing beneficiary data, bank details, Aadhaar number, mobile number, Aadhaar validation and fund transfer by States/UTs/Implementing Agencies. The web-based CAS/MIS are also used for real time monitoring of number of beneficiaries getting the benefits and services, quantum of fund transferred, grievance redressal, etc., at Ministry level. The Web-based CAS/MIS in respect of these have been integrated with DBT Portal of DBT Mission, Cabinet Secretariat for automatic monthly reporting of progress of DBT schemes through web services except for one scheme (One Stop Centre) for which the development of MIS is under process."
- **Supplementary Nutrition (under the ICDS) Rules, 2017:** In pursuance of the provisions contained in the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, this Ministry has notified the Supplementary Nutrition (under Integrated Child Development Services Scheme) Rules, 2017 on 20th February 2017 to regulate the entitlement specified under provisions of said Act for every pregnant women and lactating mother till 6 months after child birth, and every child in the age group of 6 months to 6 years (including those suffering from malnutrition) for 300 days in a year, as per the nutritional standards specified in Schedule II of the said Act. In case of non-supply of the entitled quantities of food grains or meals to entitled persons, such persons shall be entitled to receive such food security allowance from the concerned State Government to be paid to each person, within such time and manner as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

Enhancement of honorarium of Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)/ Anganwadi Helpers (AWHs):

- **The AWWs and AWHs** are paid fixed honorarium per month as decided by the Government from time to time. The Government has, recently, enhanced honorarium to AWWs from ₹ 3,000/- to ₹ 4,500/- per month; AWWs at mini-AWCs from ₹ 2,250/- to ₹ 3,500/- per month; AWHs from ₹ 1,500/- to ₹ 2,250/- per month; and introduced performance linked incentive of ₹ 250/- per month to AWHs effective from 1st October, 2018.
- **Further, the AWWs** are allowed performance linked incentive of ₹ 500/- per month for using ICDS-CAS under POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- **In addition to the honorarium** paid by the Government of India, the respective States/UTs are also giving monetary incentives to these workers out of their own resources for additional duties assigned to them under other Schemes.

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

- **With the aim of reforming Government** delivery system by re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes for simpler and faster flow of benefits and services and to ensure accurate targeting of the beneficiaries, de-duplication and reduction of fraud, Government of India has started Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) using Aadhaar as the primary identifier of beneficiaries in its schemes. Use of Aadhaar ensures that benefits go to individuals' bank accounts electronically, minimising tiers involved in fund flow and thereby reducing delay in payment, ensuring accurate targeting of the beneficiary and curbing pilferage and duplication.
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Statistics Bureau

- **The report on Child Care Institutions and Other Homes** The Statistics Bureau has come out with the Report on Child Care Institution and Other Home in the month of September, 2018. The Ministry constituted a committee, chaired by the then Statistical Adviser, Smt. Ratna Anjan Jena, for analysing data of Mapping and Review Exercise of Child Care Institutions under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Other Homes, and report writing. The report is a step in the direction to create a National database on functioning of the CCI in the country based upon their legal status, staffing, facilities, support systems, funding, management, adherence to norms and standards, etc. Utilisation of the finding and recommendations of the report by all stakeholders is important for ameliorating the conditions for the neediest and vulnerable children placed in the CCIs/Homes.
- **Report on Performing and Non-performing NGOs** An important contribution made by the Statistics Bureau in June 2018 was the release of the 'List of Performing and Non-Performing NGOs'. NGOs from all States and Union Territories were included in the list. The State/UT-wise list will be helpful in assisting Ministries to decide upon grants of funds or assignment of any task to the NGOs. It will also help general public to know about the performing and non-performing NGOs in their areas. The list is available on the official website of the Ministry.
- **Internship Programme** The Statistics Bureau also conducts Internship program for young students under the Research Scheme of the Ministry, with an objective of involving young students / scholars in research and related activities for various schemes of the Ministry. Large number of interns has successfully completed the programme; a total of 96 interns have been trained and 12 are under-going the internship so far and 50 more interns are to be enrolled for this programme by the end of December 2018. The programme has been a great achievement of the Ministry in orienting young students of graduate and post graduate level coming from various Universities and Institutes across the country.

Child Welfare Bureau

- **Child Protection Services Scheme (erstwhile ICPS):** The Child Protection Services scheme is being executed since 2009, for ensuring effective implementation of the JJ Act. The scheme aims to provide a security net through a well-defined service delivery structures and institutional care amongst other things. Further, the scheme has been brought under the Umbrella ICDS as its sub-scheme with the nomenclature as Child Protection Services. CPS provides preventive, statutory care and rehabilitation services to children who are in need of care and protection and those in conflict with law as defined under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and any other vulnerable child. It is a centrally sponsored scheme providing financial support to State Governments/UT Administrations for delivering services (as mandated under the JJ Act, 2015 & JJ Rules thereunder) for children, either themselves or through suitable NGOs. This year emphasis has been given on rationalization of facilities and emphasizing upon monitoring and inspection of CCIs to ensure effective management of services in the best interest of the children living therein.
- **Statutory Support Services under CPS** It has been reported by the State Governments/ UT Administrations that so far 723 Child Welfare Committees and 702 Juvenile Justice Boards have been set up across the country.
- **Institutional Care Services under the CPS** During 2018-19, the Ministry has assisted 1511 Homes, 322 Specialized Adoption Agencies (SAAs) and 265 Open Shelters through State Governments/UT Administrations.
- **Beneficiaries covered through institutional care** During 2018-19 more than 78000 children have been availing the institutional care facilities provided under the CPS scheme.
- **Inspection and monitoring of CCIs:** In order to ensure protection of children living in CCIs, the Ministry has pursued with State/UTs Govts to conduct inspections and maintain the institutions in accordance with the vision of the JJ Model Rules, 2016. The Ministry has also advised the State Government to conduct background check of agencies managing CCIs and also ensure police verification of the staff. The Ministry has advised the States/UTs to take action

for the welfare of children, in case of any eventuality while living in CCl's. The Ministry has consistently pursued with the States/UTs to ensure registration of all Child Care Institutions under the JJ act. So far more than 8200 CCl's across the country have been registered under the JJ Act. 539 CCl's have been closed by the States/UTs after inspections on various grounds.

- **Non-Institutional Care Services** During 2018-19 emphasis has also been given to strengthen non-institutional support services including foster care, sponsorship and adoption. As on 30th November, 2018 more than 6000 children have benefitted through sponsorship component of the Scheme. Apart from this, around 1900 children have been placed for 'In-country adoption' and 365 children have been placed for 'Inter Country Adoption' during this year (as on 30th November, 2018).
- **Child Helpline** Child helpline (1098) is a component of the scheme linking the Child to the child protection system directly and assisting thereafter in availing the services thereunder. Presently around 65% of the country covering 475 locations is being serviced by Child Line. The Ministry has been running the 24x7 child helpline in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations. The service is being provided by Childline India Foundation (CIF) –a Mother NGO, in partnership with other civil society organizations across the country. In order to ensure transparency and accountability in delivering the child protection services, the NGO partners are registered on NITI Ayog and have been boarded on PFMS portal.
- **Child Help Desks at Railway Stations** The Ministry of WCD has framed Special Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be implemented with the help of Railways for rescue and rehabilitation of runaway, abandoned, kidnapped, trafficked children via railways. The CHILD Help Desk are set up at various railway stations for rescue and rehabilitation of runaway, abandoned, kidnapped, trafficked children via railways. So far, the Child Help Desks at railway stations have been increased from 62 railway stations during 2017-18 to 84 railway stations during 2018-19. Over 60000 children have been assisted by these facilities during current year.
- **Celebration of Hausala 2018** The Ministry of Women and Child Development hosted the 2nd inter-Child Care Institution festival, "Hausla 2018" for the children residing in child care institutions between 26-29th November 2018. The event was organized around the theme of 'child safety' to inspire children of Child Care Institutions so that they can reach the National Stage for expressing their capabilities. Besides, the event also aimed to understand the views of children regarding their safety in various situations. During the festival, children participated in various activities like debate, painting, athletics meet, football and chess competition. A new competition called 'Abhiviyakti' to encourage free expression amongst children was introduced this year. More than 600 children from CCl's across 18 States/UTs participated in the programme.
- **Khoya-Paya Portal** In order to bring citizen participation for protecting children, a citizen based portal Khoya Paya has been launched in June, 2015, which enables posting of information of missing or sighted children. So far more than 9962 users have been registered on the Portal during 2018-19. Besides, more than 110000 cases of missing- sighted children have been published on the portal.
- **E-Box for Children who have suffered sexual abuse** Children are often unable to complain about sexual abuse. In order to provide them with a safe and anonymous mode of making a complaint, an internet based facility, POCSO e-Box, has been provided at NCPDR website where the child or anyone on his/her behalf can file a complaint with minimal details. POCSO e-Box receives complaints from other mediums such as e-mail, POCSO e-button etc. As soon as the complaint is filed, a trained counsellor immediately contacts the child and provides assistance to the child. The counsellor also registers a formal complaint on behalf of the child wherever warranted. A total number of 3213 hits have been received on helpline number since the launch of POCSO e-Box, i.e., from 26th August, 2016 till 20th December, 2018. Out of these hits, 135 cases were found to be covered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.
- **Draft Child Protection Policy** The Ministry has framed draft Child Protection Policy 2018. The policy draws upon the safeguards provided under the Constitutions of India, various child-centric legislation, international treaties as well as other existing policies for the protection and wellbeing of children. It aims at providing a safe and conducive environment for all children through the prevention and response to child abuse, exploitation and neglect. It provides a framework for all institution, and organization (including corporate and media houses), government or private sector to understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding/ protecting children and promoting the welfare of children; individually and collectively.
- **Conferment of Awards : Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Baal Puraskar** The Ministry of WCD has been giving awards to the meritorious children and Individuals /Institutions for several decades. The scheme has been revamped in 2018 to make it more broad based and inclusive. The National Child Award, now called the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Baal Puraskar are to be given in two categories:
 - **Baal Shakti Puraskar:** These awards are to be given as recognition to children residing in India above the age of (+5) years and not exceeding 18 years (as on 31st August of respective year)with exceptional abilities and outstanding achievement in fields of innovation, scholastic achievements, sports, arts & culture, social service and bravery which deserves recognition. Each awardee is given a medal, a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/-, book vouchers worth Rs. 10,000/-, a certificate and citation. The achievement should not be one-off, but carried out over a period of time. The achievements should be consistent and indicative of child's passion in respective field.
 - **Baal Kalyan Puraskar** Under 'Individual' category : These Awards are given as recognition to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution towards service for children in the field of Child Development, Child Protection and Child Welfare for not less than 7 years and have a positive impact on the lives of children. Three (3) Awards may be given in this category. The award consists of a cash prize of Rs. 1, 00,000/- (one lakh), a citation and a certificate to each awardee.
 - **Under 'Institution' category:** These awards are proposed to be given to institutions who have done exceptional work for the cause of children in any field of child welfare for not less than 10 years. Three (3) Awards may be given in this category. The award for each institution consists of a prize of Rs. 5,00,000/- each and a citation and a certificate.
- **Launch of National Children Award Portal** The Ministry has launched an exclusive Portal/website i.e. www.nca-wcd.nic.in for National Children Award for accepting online application forms on 1.8.2018. Open nominations from public are received through the online mode only. Applications received other than the online mode are not entertained. The web portal accepts nominations round the year, while limiting consideration up to 31th August of the respective year, for awards to be given in the month of January, next year. Applications received after due date will be considered for the awards in the next year. Any citizen can recommend a child having exceptional achievement through the online portal. Constitution of Mediation Cell in NCPDR

- **The Ministry has constituted a Mediation Cell** in NCPCR to resolve the cases of children who were taken away by one of the spouses without permission of the other, due to marital discord or due to domestic violence, from other countries to India or vice versa. The initiative is for preparing a Parental Plan taking into account the best interest of the child.

Child budgeting

- **Child budgeting** is a policy initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. As a result of detailed deliberations with Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Finance has issued an Office Memorandum asking all the Ministries to indicate the dimensions of child welfare while formulating any schemes/projects. This initiative will help the children to be at equal footing in so far as harnessing the benefits of government schemes. This initiative will focus the attention of policy makers on children as equal clients. Child budgeting has been stressed upon as an integral component of Budget document issued by Ministry of Finance during 2018-19. All the Ministries/Departments have been directed to appoint a nodal officer for Gender and Child budgeting.
- **Safe Neighborhood Campaign** Apart from several legislative and programmatic measures for child protection, the Ministry has also initiated an advocacy programme for encouraging safe neighbourhood for children to prevent children from abuse and atrocities. The awareness will be generated through electronic and print media along with other activities.

Food and Nutrition Board

- **Food and Nutrition Board** carried out various activities for different target groups for disseminating nutrition related information. FNB Headquarters, through its four Regional Offices, provides the technical as well as logistic support for the functioning of these units and conducts the following training programmes in the field units.
- **Training of Trainers (TOT) Programme in Nutrition:** Each CFNEU organizes five days "Training of Trainers" programme for Master Trainers comprising of Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs), Assistant Child Development Project Officers (ACDPOs), Medical Officers, Senior Supervisors of ICDS, Teachers, reputed NGOs, VDO, Gram Sevak etc. who, in turn, act as trainers for the grass-root level functionaries of ICDS, such as Anganwadi workers and the community at large. Total 23 TOT programmes have been organized, benefitting 460 participants.
- **Orientation Training Courses (OTCs):** Each CFNEU organizes training for two days for 30 participants comprising of grass root level workers from ICDS and Health such as AWWs, Helpers, and ASHAs, adolescent girls, pregnant, newly married, communities and PRIs, etc. The themes for OTC are (i) Infant and Young Child Feeding (ii) Health and Nutrition and (iii) Management of Severe Malnutrition. Total 342 OTC programmes have been organized, benefitting 10,260 participants.
- **Training in Home Scale Preservation of Fruits & Vegetables and Nutrition Education** Each CFNEU organizes 5 days training in Home Scale Preservation of Fruits & Vegetables and Nutrition education for 30 participants including housewives and adolescent girls and unemployed youths, to encourage them to preserve fruits and vegetables at the household level. To balance intake of vitamins and minerals for healthy and income generating activity too. A Ready Reckoner on fruits and vegetable preservation and nutrition is distributed to the trainees on completion of the training. Each CFNEU also organizes special training in Home Scale Preservation of Fruits & Vegetables and Nutrition education for SC/ST beneficiaries including adolescent girls and women. Total 181 training programmes have been organized, benefitting 5430 participants.
- **Nutrition Education programmes (NEP)** The Nutritional status of the country has been recognized as an important indicator of national development. In other words, malnutrition is an impediment in national development and hence assumed the status of national problem and not merely sectoral problem. Massive Health and Nutrition Education are the most sustainable and cost effective programme to encourage appropriate dietary intake and healthy life styles among all segments of population. Hence, Nutrition Education Programmes are organized undertaken in rural and Tribal Areas and Urban slums. Total 2275 NEP have been organized, benefitting 80,719 participants.
- **Monitoring of the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)** Anganwadis under different ICDS projects are being visited to monitor the supplementary nutrition and to facilitate the nutrition and health components of the ICDS. During the visit, the FNB staff provides technical support on nutrition and health education at the AWC by organizing various nutrition education activities. Total 2638 No. of inspections of ICDS AWCs has been conducted.
- **Food Analysis:** Food & Nutrition Board has four Regional Quality Control Laboratories at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, which analyse various supplementary foods items provided under the Anganwadi Services Scheme. The samples are received from the State Governments as well as drawn by field units of FNB during the visit to AWCs. A total of 1348 samples were analyzed by FNB's Regional Quality Control Laboratories up to November, 2018 during the year 2018-19.
- **Setting up of four New Food Testing Laboratories (01 Central and 03 Regional Laboratories):** Presently, Food & Nutrition Board (FNB) is setting-up four state-of-the-art Food Testing Laboratories, 01 Central Food Testing Laboratory at Faridabad and 03 Regional Food Testing Laboratories at Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai for quality analysis of food samples and other nutrition related convergent work. work of FTL, Faridabad and Kolkata has been

completed. Brick work, Plastering & flooring work of FTL, Chennai has also been completed and construction work of FTL, Mumbai will be completed in the month of February, 2019. Further, procurement & installation of laboratory equipment and laboratory furniture etc. is under progress.

- **Restructuring of Food and Nutrition Board:** Food and Nutrition Board (FNB) was reorganized in terms of manpower & infrastructure in view of the setting-up of the four Food Testing Laboratories, 1 Central Laboratory at Faridabad and 3 Regional Laboratories at Kolkata, Chennai & Mumbai in place of existing four Quality Control Laboratories as these laboratories, established long time ago, are not only very old but also the facilities/equipment provided/installed therein are outdated and lacking in proper infrastructure to carry out food testing as per the latest food safety standards. Since the expansion of the existing facilities is not possible due to insufficient space and outdated equipment, the setting-up of four new laboratories (1 Central Laboratory and 3 Regional Laboratories) with the state-of-the-art technology is in progress. In view of this, total 110 new regular posts have been created and 23 posts have been revived in Food and Nutrition Board to meet the manpower requirement for running the four new state-of-the-art laboratories being set-up at Faridabad, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai.

National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development Major Programmatic Achievements of NIPCCD

- **National Institute** of Public Cooperation and Child Development, popularly known as NIPCCD, an autonomous organisation under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India is a premier organisation devoted to promotion of voluntary action and research, training and documentation in the overall domain of women and child development. The objectives of the Institute are to: develop and promote voluntary action in social development; take a comprehensive view of child development and to promote and develop relevant need-based programmes in pursuance of the National Policy for Children;
- **National Policy for Empowerment** of Women and other related policies affecting women & children; develop measures for coordination between governmental and voluntary action in social development; evolve framework and perspective for organising programmes related to women & children through governmental and voluntary efforts; and establish liaison with international and regional agencies, research institutions, universities and technical bodies engaged in activities similar to those of the Institute. The Training in the areas related to Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), Women & Child Development and Child Rights & Child Protection including Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) and POCSO Act, 2012 constitute the major activities of the Institute. The achievements of the Institute from April, 2018 to December, 2018 are as under:
- **During the year 2018-19**, the Institute organised a total of 293 (upto December, 2018) training programmes which were attended by 10,598 participants. Out of these, 208 programmes were organised on issues relating to Women and Child Development, including Child Protection, Juvenile Justice Act and POCSO Act, 2012 and 85 training programmes for the functionaries of ICDS which were attended by 7,754 and 2844 participants, respectively.

Highlights of the Activities Important Activities

- **The Ministry of Women and Child Development** organized "Women of India Organic Festival 2018" from 26 October, 2018 to 4 November, 2018 at Indira Gandhi National Centre (IGNCA) to support and encourage women and women-led groups that promote organic farming, thus supporting their local community's economy, creating jobs and keeping farmers thriving, in addition to spreading proper awareness about the benefits of organic products from all over India. Women entrepreneurs from 25 States came together with their organic products like rice, dal, spices, vegetables and fruits including tribal and ethnic products. The exhibition also involved display and sale of organic products such as cereals, pulses, lentils, millets, spices, beauty care, aroma therapy and bio-products etc. Women entrepreneurs of Women of India Organic Festival 2018 also enrolled themselves in Mahila E-Haat, another initiative of the Ministry of Women & Child Development. NIPCCD provided logistic support during the event.
- **The Institute organized** 4th International Yoga Day on 21st June, 2018 at the behest of Ministry of Women and Child Development. Nearly 300 (regular, contractual temporary staff in the Hqrs, and Regional Centres) participated in the yoga held in the lawn of the Institute. The Institute procured the yoga kit and reading material from Ministry Ayush etc. and distributed the same to all participating employees.
- **The National Nutrition Week** was observed by the Institute at its Headquarters and Regional Centres from 1 to 7 September, 2018. During this week, various activities were undertaken, which included: visit to AWC; activities at Child Care Centre i.e. fancy dress competition on smart eating food; healthy recipe competition by mothers at CCC; community counselling session on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) Practices in Aanganwadi Centre; talk on health issues etc.
- **The Institute celebrated Hindi** Pakhwada from 1 to 14 September, 2018 which included activities such as: dictation competition, translation and Hindi knowledge competitions etc.
- **The Institute also observed** Swachhata hi Sewa from 15 September, 2018 to 2 October, 2018. Various activities were undertaken during the swachhata pakhwada which included: cleanliness drive within the Institute; activities for children in CCC on theme swachhata; shram Dan in Institute's campus; swachhata quiz; slogan and poster competition; rally in Shahpur Jat; forming swachhata human chain; and 'Swachh Evam Swachh Bachpan' programme in Solan, Himachal Pradesh.

- **The MWCD celebrated “Hausla 2018”** between 26th to 29th November, 2018 by hosting an inter CCI festival for the children who reside in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) with the aim that it would provide an occasion to showcase the talents and provide them with a space to express their dreams and aspirations. Children participated in various events like Painting Competition, Debate Competition, Safe Neighborhood Project, Athletics Meet, Football and Chess Competition. About than 600 children from 18 States/UTs participated in the programme who had come from various child care institutions across the country. NIPCCD assisted MWCD in organising the events.
- **Training Programmes Advanced Diploma in Child Guidance and Counselling** One-year Advanced Diploma in Child Guidance and Counselling commenced from 1 August, 2018 with the main objectives to: explore and evolve attitudes, values and beliefs that facilitates work with children as mental health professionals; acquire knowledge and understanding of theoretical constructs and socio-cultural perspectives in the context of counselling; develop skills to plan, provide and monitor counselling interventions for children and child-related systems; and develop skills of mobilizing resources and networking and collaborating with stakeholders. A total number of 29 students were enrolled for the current year.
- **In addition to this**, a Certificate Course on Child and Adolescent Counselling was organized by Headquarters with the main objectives to: sensitize the practitioners and counsellors with the strategies that enhance parental resources to support their children with developmental disorders; enable the teachers to understand the challenges of children in contemporary society and the role of schools in supporting their development, critically apprise them with the strategies to promote emotional well-being and achievement in children so that the children are able to meet developmental goals; orient them to the various learning and behavior difficulties in children and the special needs of children in difficult situations; enhance the ability of teachers to identify early symptoms of learning and behavior problems in children and carry out informal assessments; and provide comprehensive skills in counselling children and families for promoting emotional wellbeing of children and provide skills in carrying out awareness and sensitization workshops for teachers and parents on significant mental health concerns relating to children and growing up.

Women and Child Development

- **A number of Parental Workshops** on creating a Conducive Environment for Enhancing Learning and Behavioural Conduct during Adolescent/ various Academic and Psychosocial Issues of Children were organized by the Institute with the main objectives to: develop an understanding about the needs of adolescence and holistic development of the adolescent children; and help parents and teachers to help their children to cope up with the physical, emotional and mental changes during this period for optimum development.
- **Besides, various training programmes/meets/workshops** on issues related to women and children were organized during the year under report. These included: BBBP; Care of New born and Infant and Young Child Feeding; Ensuring Food Safety and Maintaining Food Safety Standards in Supplementary Nutrition in Anganwadi Services under Umbrella ICDS; Japanese Encephalitis/Acute Encephalitis Syndrome for ICDS Functionaries; and Mother and Child Protection Card and Growth Monitoring.
- **Two Consultative Meets** on Support Mechanism available for the Cause of Domestic Workers were also organized by Headquarters with the main objectives to: orient the participants about the needs of adolescents through their developmental cycle; develop an understanding about gender discrimination and its implications on overall development and rights of adolescent girls; apprise the participants about various Government policies, programme, legislations and initiatives for holistic development of adolescent girls; and evolve strategies of intervention for empowerment of adolescent girls.

One Stop Centre Scheme

- **In order to build-up** the capacity of functionaries associated with the implementation of One Stop Centre Scheme, the Institute organized a number of Orientation Training Programmes for the Functionaries of One Stop Centre and Women Helpline as well as Counselors and Case Workers of One Stop Centre with the main objectives to: sensitize the participants to magnitude, causes, nature and manifestation of violence against women in India with special reference to eastern region; orient the participants on One Stop Centre Scheme and Women Helpline and other existing support services for women in distress; orient the participants on psycho-social support for violence affected women and ethical guidelines for counseling; and appraise the participants about the role and responsibilities of different stakeholders.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013** In order to build the capacities of functionaries of civil societies, Institute organised two Sensitization Programmes on Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace for Civil Society with the main objectives to: sensitize the participants on locus and manifestation of gender violence; discuss policies and legislative measures to curb atrocities against women specially at work place; analyze the problem and work out strategies for addressing the problem of sexual harassment of women at work place; and discuss existing mechanisms/ support services and provide suggestions for strengthening them.
- **In addition to this**, ten Sensitization Programmes on Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 were organized by Headquarters (forenoon & Afternoon) with the main objectives to: sensitize the participants to aspects related to addressing complaints regarding sexual harassment and spreading awareness about gender-related issues and functioning of the internal Complaints Committee.

- **Apart from this**, another Orientation Training on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 for the officials of Social Welfare Department/ WCD Departments was organized by Regional Centre Guwahati with the main objectives to: sensitize the members of ICC and other officials to the nature and trends of sexual harassment in work places; orient the participants to the salient features and provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the relevant rules; make them aware about the modalities, mechanisms and procedure of redressal under the Act; and apprise the participating members of the Committees and other officials about their roles and responsibilities.

Training of Trainers of Elected Women Representatives of Panchayati Raj (EWR)

- **The Institute** organized a series of Capacity Building Programmes for Elected Women Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions –Phase-II with the main objectives to: deliberate upon issues related to empowerment of women and children and functioning of PRIs; discuss flagship programme of Central and State Government for women, children and marginalized groups; impart knowledge on legislations for the protection of the vulnerable;
- **provide** practical know-how to monitor asset creation and public works in the villages and process of participatory planning in local governance; discuss recent developments related to dry dairy farming and e-banking, cashless transaction etc; and enable women to identify their leadership potential to contribute effectively as change agents.

Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection) Act, 2015

- **Eighteen Orientation** Training on Juvenile Justice Act 2015 and its Rules 2016 and Integrated Child Protection Scheme for the District Level Officials of Uttar Pradesh were organized by the Institute with the main objectives to: enable the participants to develop understanding on present scenario of children in the country in the context of child rights and child protection; orient the participants on salient features of Juvenile Justice Act 2015 & its Rules 2016; and orient the participants on the provisions under Integrated Child Protection Scheme and discuss the role of various stakeholders in effective implementation of JJ Act & ICPS.
- **Two Orientation Training** Programmes on Adoption Regulations, 2016 for Protection Officers (Non- Institutional Care) under ICPS were organized by Regional Centre Lucknow with the main objectives to: orient the participants regarding different provisions related to children in need of care and protection under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015; familiarize the participants regarding Adoption Regulations, 2016; and discuss the role of protection officers (non- institutional care) under ICPS in implementation of Adoption Regulation, 2017.
- **A number of Orientation** Training Programmes on Child Rights & Protection for the Functionaries of CCIs (Superintendent, Case Worker, Probation Officer, Welfare Officer, Coordinator, etc.) were organized by Headquarters and Regional Centres with the main objectives to: orient the participants about the conceptual framework of Child Rights and Protection and ground realities; enable them to understand salient features of Juvenile Justice Act 2015 and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012; discuss their role and responsibilities under ICPS and challenges faced by them in providing quality services to children, and, evolve strategies for networking, convergence and coordination mechanisms under ICPS.
- **In addition to this**, a series of Master Trainers Programme on Child Protection were organized by Headquarters and Regional Centres with the main objectives to: orient the participants about various provisions under JJ System & ICPS; discuss the policies, schemes and legislations concerning children; enable them their roles and responsibilities under the Schemes, legislations & guidelines; appraise significance of convergence and linkages to obtain better outcomes for child protection; describe implementing strategies under ICPS and, sensitize them on research & documentation, financial rules, audit & office procedures; and discuss innovative & good practices adopted by States on Child Protection.

The Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

- **The Protection of Children** against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was passed on 19 June, 2012. Subsequently, after wide-ranging consultations among various stakeholders, the POCSO Rules were notified on 14 November, 2012 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Major stakeholders for implementing the Act are the Police/Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU), Judiciary, District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Probation Officers, Counsellors, Child Care Institutions (CCIs) personnel, interpreters/translators, the medical fraternity, the community, family and relatives of the victim child and the child himself. The Central and State Governments are charged with the responsibility to create awareness about POCSO Act 2012. The Institute organized a series of Sensitization Programmes/Orientation Workshops on POCSO Act, 2012 and its Rules for stakeholders.

- **In addition to these**, a Sensitization Programme on POCSO Act, 2012 for Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions was organized by the Institute with the main objectives to: apprise the members of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) about sexual offences against children and salient features of the 'Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act; develop an understanding of their role in protecting children against child sexual abuse and supporting child victims and their families; and evolve strategies for elimination of sexual offences at the community level with support of PRIs.

Anganwadi Services under Umbrella ICDS

- **Apart from this**, several Refresher Courses for CDPOs/ACDPOs were organized by Headquarters and its Regional Centres with the main objectives to: review the implementation of restructured and strengthened programme under umbrella ICDS in the States with regard to various aspects; provide a forum for sharing of experiences in implementing the programme; apprise CDPOs/ACDPOs about the recent developments and trends in programme under umbrella ICDS; update their knowledge in the areas of early childhood care and development including nutrition and health care; and sharpen their communication, counselling and managerial skills.
- **A number of Job Training Courses** for CDPOs/ACDPOs were also organized by Institute's Headquarters and its Regional Centres with the main objectives to: orient the trainee CDPOs/ ACDPOs about ICDS programme—its philosophy, objectives, package of services and beneficiaries with respect to restructured and strengthened programme under umbrella ICDS and New WHO Child Growth Standards, MCP Card, schemes of SABLA and IGMSY; familiarize them with their role and responsibilities vis-a-vis job responsibilities of other block functionaries in coordination, supervision, and management of ICDS project; discuss with them the recent developments and thrusts in ICDS programme; share with them the need, importance and strategies for convergence of services at various levels of implementation; develop their requisite skills required for guiding grass roots level functionaries in preschool education, health & nutrition and community participation; and equip them with knowledge for effective leadership, supportive supervision and management of ICDS Projects under umbrella ICDS.
- **Besides, various Vertical Training Programmes** of Block Level ICDS Functionaries for Quality Improvement in ICDS Programme were organised by Headquarters and its Regional Centres with the main objectives to: enhance the skills of CDPOs and Supervisors to act as a Master Trainer for providing continuing education to AWWs at project level; provide inputs to improve knowledge and skills of all ICDS functionaries at project level for quality improvement in ICDS Services; and work jointly and formulate joint action plan at project level for quality improvement of delivery of services under umbrella ICDS.
- **In addition to this**, a Sensitization Programme on Nutritional Assessment of Children in Anganwadi Services Scheme was organized by Regional Centre, Bengaluru with the main objectives to: apprise the participants on Importance of Nutritional Status of Children; and update their knowledge on importance of methods of nutritional assessment such as stunting, wasting in children, enhancing their skills by providing classroom practice exercises on various nutritional assessment tools.
- **An Orientation Programme** for newly recruited Supervisors of Delhi for e-Learning Job Training Course was also organized by Headquarters with the main objectives to: orient participants about the use of e-learning programme for ICDS functionaries; provide hands on experience on e-learning programme to the supervisors and bridge the learning gap and build their confidence.
- **Besides, a Review cum Contact Training Programme** on e – Learning for CDPOs of Tamil Nadu was organized by the Institute with the main objectives to: orient participants about the use of e-learning programme for ICDS functionaries; provide hands on experience on e-learning programme to the CDPOs; bridge the learning gap and build their confidence, to use e-learning mode of training; and identify Master Trainers in e-learning programme for future.
- **An Orientation Meeting for Nodal Officers** Dealing with Training of Anganwadi Services Functionaries was also organized by Headquarters with the main objectives to: familiarize the Nodal Officers about recent developments in Anganwadi Services under Umbrella ICDS; analyze the problems hindering success in Anganwadi Services implementation; discuss about the strategies for making effective training plan for Anganwadi Services functionaries; and document best practices of States/UTs with regard to implementation of Anganwadi Services/ECCE for achieving nutrition and child development related outcomes.
- **A series of Skill Training Programmes** for CDPOs on Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) PMMVY-CAS Portal, Revised MIS, Rapid Reporting System and Data Management in Anganwadi Services under Umbrella ICDS for various stakeholders were organized by the Institute with the main objectives to: familiarize the participants on the importance and use of PMMVY-CAS Portal; appraise them with the importance of ICDS-CAS; update trainees on the New Management Information System; and orient trainees on use and importance of effective data management.
- **In addition to this**, a Review Meet on Implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana – Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS) was organized by Headquarters with the main objectives to: deliberate upon scheme implementation modalities ,fund flow and disbursement mechanism; list down problems experienced and other related issues in implementation of PMMVY along with the current status; discuss the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders for better implementation of the scheme effectively; and promote IEC activities for awareness generation and document and share best practices of States for improving health status of women and children.
- **Research** The Headquarters and its Regional Centres undertake research in areas falling within its mandate. Evaluation studies are conducted to assess the impact of ongoing schemes or projects on Women and Child Development, as an independent initiative, or at the request of sponsoring Department/agency. Documentation of the research work in the form of reports, compilations and manuals is done for wider dissemination. A total of 20 such projects and research studies are nearing completion during the current year.

Strengthening of Monitoring and Supervision System in ICDS Scheme—Through Central Monitoring Unit of NIPCCD

- **The Ministry** of Women and Child Development has set up a monitoring and supervision mechanism of the Anganwadi Services Scheme through NIPCCD in addition to the existing Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- **At the National level**, a Central Monitoring Unit (CMU) has been set up at NIPCCD, New Delhi, with the objective to undertake regular monitoring of functioning and implementation of Anganwadi Services Scheme in the country.
- **During 2017-18**, Central Monitoring Unit (CMU) had been revamped and the involvement of external institutions namely Medical Colleges, Home Science Colleges and School of Social Work have been delinked.
- **The existing consultants and project staff have been trained in Monitoring and Supervision of Anganwadi Services Scheme under Umbrella ICDS. These Officials have been assigned above work.**
- **The project staff of CMU and Faculty/staff members of NIPCCD visited 3065 Anaganwadi Centres, 151 ICDS Projects and 17 AWTCs/MLTCs in 72 districts covering 21 States in the country. The year wise no. of AWTCs and ICDS projects visited are as under: MWCD has reviewed the functioning of CMU, NIPCCD and has intimated that CMU may be limited to non-ICDS-CAS districts etc.**

International Women's Day Celebration - 2018

- **Nari Shakti Puraskar: The Ministry celebrated International Women's Day 2018 on 8th March 2018 to acknowledge women's contribution and her achievements. On this occasion Hon'ble President of India conferred Nari Shakti Puraskars (2017) to 38 eminent women and institutions in recognition of their service towards the cause of women empowerment.**
- **(b) Hon'ble Prime Minister / Hon'ble Minister, WCD interaction with Awardees: On this happy occasion Hon'ble Prime Minister of India invited the Nari Shakti Puraskar Awardees to his residence and spent the evening interacting with them on 09.3.2018. Hon'ble Minister, WCD hosted a fine dinner in honour of the distinguished Awardees at Hotel Ashok, Delhi**

National Conference of State/UT Ministries in-charge of Women and Child Development:

- **The Ministry of Women and Child Development organized the National Conference of State / UT Ministers in-charge of Women and Child Development on 17.07.2018 at Le Meridien under the Chairpersonship of Smt. Menaka Sanjay Gandhi, Hon'ble Minister for Women and Child Development. Dr. Virendra Kumar, Hon'ble Minister of State and thirteen other State / UT Ministers, and Secretaries participated in the National Conference.**
- **During the Conference various challenges being faced by the States/UTs in implementation of the Ministry's Schemes, Policies, & cross-cutting programmes were discussed. The best practices, schemes and programmes implemented by States/UTs were shared amongst other States/UTs for replication in their States/UTs. The highlight of the Conference deliberations touched upon sensitive issues like atrocities perpetuated on women and children with effective ways and means to curb the evil.**

Celebration of International Yoga Day on 21st June, 2018 in all Anganwadi Centres:

- **The International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated on 21st June, 2018 by Ministry of Women and Child Development officials in the premises of National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) 5, Siri Institutional Area, Hauz Khas, New Delhi.**

- All the officials were given yoga banians, mats, guidelines and yoga teacher was also arranged for flawless practice & celebration of yoga. All the States/UTs were also advised to celebrate International Day of Yoga in a befitting manner with special emphasis for SAFE Yoga practice by pregnant mothers.

Swachh Bharat Mission:

- The drive of “Swachh Bharat Mission” has been one of the main priority of this Ministry.
- The Ministry has participated in the Swachhta hi Sewa campaign from 15th September, 2018 to 2nd October, 2018. During the campaign, all AWWs and ICDS workers were involved in Shramdaan at Village levels. Rallies were carried out with placards by children, white washing of AWC and cleaning of surrounding areas was done. All the Officers/Officials of the Ministry contributed in the Swachhata activities by doing Shramdaan.
- During Swachhta Hi Sewa (Cleanliness is Service) campaign, Food and Nutrition Board (FNB) has undertaken series of activities like cleanliness drive, cleaning of toilets, vigorous cleaning in and around the office, pledge on cleanliness in our daily life, prohibit use of plastic bags, various awareness activities like IEC campaign on Swachhta Hi Sewa comprising personal hygiene and sanitation, environmental sanitation, tree plantation, cleaning of office premises, Film /Slide shows on personal hygiene and sanitation, demonstrations on hand washing, motivating common public towards cleanliness along with other Swachhta- related activities.

Swachhta Pakhwada:

- The Ministry observed Swachhta Pakhwada from 1st to 15th March, 2018 commemorating with International Women’s Day celebration. The focus was on lead role for women and children community-led sanitation initiatives which will have a far-reaching and wide impact on women and children’s health, safety, dignity, education and livelihood. During the Pakhwada, senior officials from Ministry visited different States of the country where special programmes were organized in partnership with local administration. At the autonomous bodies under the administrative control of the Ministry such as CARA, NIPCCD, NCPCR, NCW and RMK etc. and its field formation spread all over the country organized various activities in Swachhta Pakhwada extensively.
- Out of the total 13,63,300 operational Anganwadi Centres across the country, 9,29,339 AWCs have toilet facilities and 11,72,896 AWCs have drinking water facilities.
- Apart from above, this Ministry has also released funds for construction of toilets in 69,974 AWC buildings and for providing drinking water facilities in 19,993 AWCs as on 30.11.2018. From time to time, this Ministry has issued directions to all the States for conducting Swachhta Pakhwada in their State/UT and conduct Swachhta related activities in AWCs such as:
 - White-washing the AWCs involving local communities; Cleanliness in and around the AWCs; Weeding out of obsolete records, documents, etc; Review of toilets constructed; Involving private sector under CSR for Swachhta; Construction of toilets in rented AWCs or shifting of such AWCs to the building having toilet facilities; etc.
- MWCD, vide DO letter, dated 13.09.2018 has requested the officers concerned dealing with Anganwadi Services in all States/UTs to conduct Swachhta Pakhwada during 15th September, 2018 to 2nd October, 2018 and conduct the aforementioned activities using the platform of AWCs.
- Food and Nutrition Board observed Swachhta Pakhwada with its Regional Offices and 42 Community Food and Nutrition Extension Units (CFNEUs) throughout the country. During the Swachhta Pakhwada, the Regional Offices and CFNEUs organized special activities to emphasize on the importance of Hygiene and Sanitation and its impact on the nutritional and health status. The following activities have been undertaken during the fortnight with the involvement of ICDS, Health, Mid-Day-Meal and Panchayati Raj functionaries:
 - Meeting with State Government authorities to orient and design plan of action One-day Workshop on Personal Hygiene and environmental sanitation and nutrition Cleanliness drive – weeding out old records, cleaning of office toilets, painting and white wash, office premises and store room. IEC campaign on Swachh Bharat Tree plantation Swachh Bharat Oath

PM launches DD Arunprabha – a dedicated 24x7 Satellite channel for Arunachal Pradesh

- PM lays foundation stone of Film and Television Institute and several other projects at Arunachal Pradesh
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today launched DD Arunprabha at Arunachal Pradesh. He also laid foundation stone of Film and Television Institute (FTI) and several other projects in the state.
- Prime Minister said that in order to strengthen and develop the culture of the State, a dedicated 24x7 Satellite TV channel DD Arunprabha has been launched by the Government. He expressed hope that the channel will act as an ambassador of the culture of the state and will familiarize people across India with the beauty and the culture of the State.
- Talking about the Film and Television Institute to be developed in Jote, he said that it will not only will give new avenues and opportunities to the youngsters but will also be a boost for the expression of the culture of the State.
- Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister recounted the impact these projects will have on the lives of people of Arunachal Pradesh. He said that for the development of New India, the development of North-East is essential. He mentioned about the benefits set to accrue to the state under UdanYojna, while also highlighting other initiatives being taken to boost infrastructure in the region. He also appreciated the impact of SaubhagyaYojna in ensuring electrical connectivity for almost all the people in the State. All these steps will further boost tourism in the region, he stated. He also highlighted the benefits of PM-KISAN set to accrue to the farmers of the country, including those of the State.
- Background DD Arunprabha is the 24th satellite channel operated by Doordarshan. It is equipped with state of the art facilities, including a Digital Satellite News Gathering unit to provide live coverage from remote locations, for 24x7 telecast. The playout facility and the earth stations established at DDK Itanagar will ensure seamless transmission of DD Arunprabha.
- The channel will showcase the rich tradition and diversity of local culture. Not only will it help integrate North-East with the country, but will also bring alive the magnificence of North-East by airing content sensitive to the needs and aspirations of local population including news, travelogues, mythological shows, documentaries, magazines, tele-films, reality shows, daily shows etc.
- The permanent campus of Film and Television Institute will come up at Jollang-Rakap (Jote), Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh. This is the third Film and Television Institute of Ministry of I&B, the first two being FTII Pune and SRFTI Kolkata. It is the first Film and Television Institute of entire North-East.

Exercise Cutlass Express:

- About Exercise Cutlass Express 2019: What is it? It is an exercise designed to assess and improve combined maritime law enforcement capacity, promote national and regional security in East Africa as well as information sharing, planning and operating.
- Sponsored by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and is conducted by U.S. Naval Forces Africa.
- The aim of the exercise: To improve law enforcement capacity, promote regional security and progress inter-operability between the armed forces of the participating nations.

GeM and CCI Sign MoU

- About GeM: What is it? GeM is a state-of-the-art national public procurement platform of Ministry of Commerce and Industries, that has used technology to remove entry barriers for bonafide sellers and has created a vibrant e-marketplace with a wide range of goods and services.
- GeM aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement. Features: It facilitates online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government Departments / Organisations / PSUs. It provides the tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation to facilitate the government users, achieve the best value for their money.
- Competition Commission of India: It is a statutory body of the Government of India, responsible for enforcing the Competition Act, 2002 throughout India and to prevent activities that have an adverse effect on competition.

Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)

- **Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR):** It is a missile propulsion technology jointly developed by India and Russia.
- **Significance:** It will help both India's surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles to perform better and enhance their strike range, making them more lethal. With it, India can have fastest long-range missiles in two categories, providing full-fledged and multi-layered aerial protection from hostile attacks.
- Its successful use in missiles will mark India's entry into select club of nations that use next-generation missile technology against manoeuvring targets, compromising effectiveness of conventional missiles.
- **What is ramjet?** Ramjet is a form of air-breathing jet engine that uses the vehicle's forward motion to compress incoming air for combustion without a rotating compressor. Fuel is injected in the combustion chamber where it mixes with the hot compressed air and ignites. A ramjet-powered vehicle requires an assisted take-off like a rocket assist to accelerate it to a speed where it begins to produce thrust.

Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals(CMS)

- India has been a Party to the CMS since 1983. The Conference of Parties (COP) is the decision-making organ of this convention.
- **About CMS:** In order to protect the migratory species throughout their range countries, a Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), has been in force, under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme.
- Also referred to as the Bonn Convention, it provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats and brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
- **Classification of species:** Under this convention, migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I and Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention.
- CMS is only global and UN-based intergovernmental organization established exclusively for conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range.
- **What are migratory species? Why protect them?** Migratory species are those animals that move from one habitat to another during different times of the year, due to various factors such as food, sunlight, temperature, climate, etc.
- The movement between habitats, can sometimes exceed thousands of miles/kilometres for some migratory birds and mammals. A migratory route can involve nesting and also requires the availability of habitats before and after each migration.

National Deworming Day (NDD)

- NDD is observed bi-annually on 10th February and 10th August in all states and UTs followed by mop-up activities. This year the NDD is being conducted on 8th February and mop up day on the 14th February.
- **About the National Deworming Day:** The National Deworming Day is a single fixed-day approach to treating intestinal worm infections in all children aged 1- 19 years. It will mobilize health personnel, state governments and other stakeholders to prioritize investment in control of Soil Transmitted Helminth (STH) infections one of the most common infections.

- **All the children are provided deworming tablet in schools and anganwadis. Besides the deworming tablet, various health promotion activities related to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) are organised in schools and anganwadis. The NDD program** is a cost-effective program at scale that continues to reach crores of children and adolescents with deworming benefits through a safe medicine Albendazole.
- **Background:** India carries the highest burden of worm infestation and 64% of Indian population less than 14 years of age are at risk of Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH) or worms' infestation (WHO). Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH) interfere with nutrients uptake in children; can lead to anaemia, malnourishment and impaired mental and physical development. The situation of undernutrition and anaemia which is linked to STH ranges from 40% to 70% in different population groups across the country (WHO). They also pose a serious threat to children's education and productivity later in life.
- **About Intestinal parasitic worms:** They are large multicellular organisms, which when mature can generally be seen with the naked eye. They are also known as Helminths. They are often referred to as intestinal worms even though not all helminths reside in the intestines.
- **Why this is a cause for concern?** Parasitic worms in children interfere with nutrient uptake, and can contribute to anaemia, malnourishment, and impaired mental and physical development. Parasitic worms have also debilitating consequences on the health and education of children, and on their long-term earning potential.
- **According to the 2012 report 'Children in India',** published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 48% of children under the age of 5 years are stunted and 19.8% are wasted, indicating that half of the country's children are malnourished.
- **Significance of NDD:** Anganwadi and school-based mass deworming program is safe, cost-effective, and can reach crores of children quickly. Deworming has been shown to reduce absenteeism in schools; improve health, nutritional, and learning outcomes; and increase the likelihood of higher-wage jobs later in life.
- **Deworming with the safe** and beneficial Albendazole tablet is an evidence-based, globally-accepted, and effective solution to controlling worm infections. National Deworming Day has, thus, been designed to reach all children, regardless of socio-economic background.

Drugs Technical Advisory Board

- **The decision was taken in consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board.** What necessitates this move? Majority of medical devices are completely unregulated in India. With this move, all implantable devices and some diagnostic equipment will be brought into the regulatory framework which is important from a patient safety perspective.
- **Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB):** DTAB is highest statutory decision-making body on technical matters related to drugs in the country. It is constituted as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. It is part of Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill

- **Key facts:** The proposed amendments provide for elected village municipal councils, ensuring democracy at the grassroot level. The village councils will be empowered to prepare plans for economic development and social justice including those related to agriculture, land improvement, implementation of land reforms, minor irrigation, water management, animal husbandry, rural electrification, small scale industries and social forestry.
- **The Finance Commission will be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to them.** The Autonomous Councils now depend on grants from Central ministries and the State government for specific projects. At least one-third of the seats will be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura after the amendment is approved.
- **6th schedule:** The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- **Key provisions:** The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise the autonomous districts. Thus, he can increase or decrease their areas or change their names or define their boundaries and so on. If there are different tribes in an autonomous district, the governor can divide the district into several autonomous regions.
- **Composition:** Each autonomous district has a district council consisting of 30 members, of whom four are nominated by the governor and the remaining 26 are elected on the basis of adult franchise. The elected members hold office for a term of five years (unless the council is dissolved earlier) and nominated members hold office during the pleasure of the governor. Each autonomous region also has a separate regional council.

- **The district** and regional councils administer the areas under their jurisdiction. They can make laws on certain specified matters like land, forests, canal water, shifting cultivation, village administration, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs and so on. But all such laws require the assent of the governor.
- **Village councils:** The district and regional councils within their territorial jurisdictions can constitute village councils or courts for trial of suits and cases between the tribes. They hear appeals from them. The jurisdiction of high court over these suits and cases is specified by the governor.
- **Powers and functions:** The district council can establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, ferries, fisheries, roads and so on in the district. It can also make regulations for the control of money lending and trading by non-tribals. But, such regulations require the assent of the governor. The district and regional councils are empowered to assess and collect land revenue and to impose certain specified taxes.
- **The acts of Parliament** or the state legislature do not apply to autonomous districts and autonomous regions or apply with specified modifications and exceptions. The governor can appoint a commission to examine and report on any matter relating to the administration of the autonomous districts or regions. He may dissolve a district or regional council on the recommendation of the commission.

Arundhati scheme

- **Key features:** Under the scheme, the government of Assam aims to provide 1 Tola Gold to brides belonging to all such communities of Assam where it is customary to provide gold at the time of the wedding. The scheme is named after Arundhati, wife of great sage Basistha. The government has set aside Rs 300 cr has been for the implementation of the Arundhati Scheme.
- **The benefit** under Arundhati scheme can be availed upon formal registration of marriages under Special Marriage (Assam) Rules, 1954. The scheme is limited for economically weaker sections, whose annual income is below Rs 5 lakh.
- **Significance of the scheme:** Gold forms an inherent part of Indian weddings. With the introduction of the Arundhati Scheme, the government wants to stand with those fathers who cannot afford to gift a set of gold ornaments to their daughters and would resort to borrowings and put themselves in the vicious cycle of debt.

Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)

- **Background:** The trigger for the latest downturn in trade ties was India's new rules on e-commerce that restrict the way Amazon.com Inc. and Walmart-backed Flipkart do business in a rapidly growing online market set to touch \$200 billion by 2027.
- **That, coming** on top of a drive to force global card payments companies such as Mastercard and Visa to move their data to India and the imposition of higher tariffs on electronic products and smartphones, left a broader trade package the two sides were working on through last year in tatters.
- **Implications:** With this, India could lose a vital U.S. trade concession, under which it enjoys zero tariffs on \$5.6 billion of exports to the United States.
- **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP):** The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a U.S. trade program designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories.
- **What is the objective of GSP?** The objective of GSP was to give development support to poor countries by promoting exports from them into the developed countries. GSP promotes sustainable development in beneficiary countries by helping these countries to increase and diversify their trade with the United States. GSP provide opportunities for many of the world's poorest countries to use trade to grow their economies and climb out of poverty.
- **Benefits of GSP:** Indian exporters benefit indirectly – through the benefit that accrues to the importer by way of reduced tariff or duty free entry of eligible Indian products. Reduction or removal of import duty on an Indian product makes it more competitive to the importer – other things (e.g. quality) being equal. This tariff preference helps new exporters to penetrate a market and established exporters to increase their market share and to improve upon the profit margins, in the donor country.
- **What is the difference between GSP and the usual trade arrangement under WTO?** Under the normal trade laws, the WTO members must give equal preferences to trade partners. There should not be any discrimination between countries. This trade rule under the WTO is called the Most Favored Nation (MFN) clause.

- **The MFN instructs** non-discrimination that any favorable treatment to a particular country. At the same time, the WTO allows members to give special and differential treatment to from developing countries (like zero tariff imports). This is an exemption for MFN. The MSP given by developed countries including the US is an exception to MFN.
- **What is the impact of GSP withdrawal on India?** India exports nearly 50 products of the 94 products on which GSP benefits are stopped. The GSP removal will leave a reasonable impact on India as the country enjoyed preferential tariff on exports worth of nearly \$ 5. 6 billion under the GSP route out of the total exports of \$48 bn in 2017-18. In total India exports nearly 1,937 products to the US under GSP.
- **Removal of GSP** indicate a tough trade position by the US; especially for countries like India who benefited much from the scheme. India is the 11th largest trade surplus country for the US and India enjoyed an annual trade surplus of \$ 21 bn in 2017-18.

International IP Index 2019

- **What is IIP index?** Released by GIPC, the Index evaluates the IP infrastructure in each economy based on 45 unique indicators, which are critical to the growth of effective IP systems.
- **The indicators** encompass 8 categories of IP protection: patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, commercialization of IP assets, enforcement, systemic efficiency, and membership and ratification of international treaties.
- **The 2019 Index** demonstrates the close correlation between effective IP protection and economic growth, global competitiveness, and the creation of 21st century knowledge-based economies.
- **Performance of India and the factors responsible:** India is placed at rank 36th this year. In 2018, India was ranked 44 out of 50 countries. In the first edition of the report in 2014, India had ranked last in the ranking of 25 countries.
- **Among major global** economies, most substantial movement can be seen from India, which has surged almost 20% and climbed eight places in the IP Index rankings from 44th to 36th. The increase in India's ranking is a result of specific reforms that better align India's IP environment with the international IP system, including its accession to the WIPO Internet Treaties, the agreement to initiate a Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) with Japan, a dedicated set of IP incentives for small business, and administrative reforms to address the patent backlog.
- **Challenges ahead for India:** The improvement is a "real accomplishment" but substantial challenges persist, particularly regarding the country's patenting and IP enforcement environments.
- **The weakness** of India as highlighted in the report are barriers to licensing and technology transfer, including strict registration norms, limited framework for the protection of biopharmaceutical IP rights, patentability rules outside international standards, lengthy pre-grant opposition proceedings and previously used compulsory licensing for commercial and non-emergency situations as key hurdles.
- **The need for protection of IP rights:** Intellectual Property Creates and Supports High-Paying Jobs. Intellectual Property Drives Economic Growth and Competitiveness. Strong and Enforced Intellectual Property Rights Protect Consumers and Families. Intellectual Property Helps Generate Breakthrough Solutions to Global Challenges. Intellectual Property Rights Encourage Innovation and Reward Entrepreneurs.

Asiatic Lion Conservation Project

- **Key features of the project:** Key aspects of the conservation project include undertaking "habitat improvement" measures, making more sources of water available, creating a wildlife crime cell, and a task force for the Greater Gir region. 'Greater Gir' that includes, other than the existing Gir National Park, sanctuaries in Girnar, Pania and Mitiyala.
- **It would also** involve having in place a GPS-based tracking system, which would look at surveillance tracking, animal and vehicle tracking. There would also be an automated sensor grid that would have magnetic sensors, movement sensors and infra-red heat sensors. A key outcome of the project is to have a dedicated veterinary institute, lion ambulances and back-up stocks of vaccines that may be required.
- **Relocation of lions:** The Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was identified to be the most suitable for reintroducing the species, according to a Supreme Court-appointed technical expert committee, but there has been no progress on the proposal. There is a committee of experts from both States examining the suitability of Madhya Pradesh as a potential lion reserve.

- **The SC in April 2013** had ordered the translocation of some lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh within six months, but this hasn't happened. This was ordered after several recommendations by expert groups, including the Wildlife Institute of India. It emphasised that the long-term survival of the lion as a species was best served if they could be present outside Gujarat, too, so that they are protected against, say, a forest fire, a disease, or calamities.
- **Facts for Prelims:** Asiatic Lions are listed as 'Endangered' under the IUCN Red List. Its population is restricted to the state of Gujarat in India. With serious conservation efforts of the State and the Union Government, the population of Asiatic lions have increased to over 500 which used to be around 50 by late 1890s. As per the 2015 census, there were a total of 523 Asiatic Lions in Gir Protected Area Network.

Govt. grants divisional status to Ladakh:

- **Context:** Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik has granted Ladakh a divisional status. It will comprise Leh and Kargil districts, with headquarters at Leh. Earlier, Ladakh was a part of the Kashmir division.
- **Implications:** With this, there shall be three administrative units of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh in the State. The move leaves the Kashmir valley geographically the smallest division at 15,948 sq. km, Jammu division at 26,293 sq. km and Ladakh, the biggest division, at 86,909 sq. km.
- **Ladakh will now get its own Divisional Commissioner and Inspector General of Police.** What necessitated this? During the winter months, the entire Ladakh region remains cut-off from the rest of the country for almost six months. The remoteness and inaccessibility of the area makes it eligible for establishing a separate division.



Sela Tunnel

- **The project**, costing Rs 687 crore, is being constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and would be completed in the next three years.
- **Significance of the project:** Once the 12.04-km tunnel is complete it will give a fillip to the overall development of the area as it will provide all-weather connectivity to Tawang and other areas.
- **It will also** reduce the travelling time from Tezpur to Tawang by more than an hour and boost tourism and related economic activities in the region. Need: Till now, the entry to the area was only through the 13,700-feet Sela Pass, which is covered in snow in the winters making the movement of vehicles difficult.
- **Background:** The development is a part of the Union Government's effort to develop connectivity infrastructure in border areas to secure India's defence. The proposal to build the Sela Pass comes amid concerns in the defence establishment over China's growing assertiveness along the nearly 4,000 km-long Sino-India border.

Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) facility

- **About SPR programme:** To ensure energy security, the Government of India had decided to set up 5 million metric tons (MMT) of strategic crude oil storages at three locations namely, Visakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur (near Udipi). These strategic storages would be in addition to the existing storages of crude oil and petroleum products with the oil companies and would serve as a cushion during any external supply disruptions.
- **In the 2017-18 budget**, it was announced that two more such caverns will be set up Chandikhole in Jajpur district of Odisha and Bikaner in Rajasthan as part of the second phase. The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- **Need for strategic oil reserves:** In 1990, as the Gulf war engulfed West Asia, India was in the throes of a major energy crisis. By all accounts India's oil reserves at the time were adequate for only three days. While India managed to avert the crisis then, the threat of energy disruption continues to present a real danger even today.
- **It is unlikely** that India's energy needs will dramatically move away from fossil fuels in the near future. Over 80% of these fuels come from imports, a majority of which is sourced from West Asia. This is a major strategic risk and poses a massive financial drain for an embattled economy and its growing current account deficit.
- **To address energy insecurity**, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government mooted the concept of strategic petroleum reserves in 1998. Today, with India consuming upwards of four million barrels of crude every day (January 2015 figures), the case for creating such reserves grows stronger.

Himachal's first mega food park in Una

- **Mega Food Park Scheme:** To give a major boost to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with particular focus on perishables, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing Mega Food Park Scheme in the country.

- **The Mega Food Park Scheme** is based on "Cluster" approach and envisages creation of state of art support infrastructure in a well-defined agri/ horticultural zone for setting up of modern food processing units along with well-established supply chain.
- **Common facilities** and enabling infrastructure is created at Central Processing Centre and facilities for primary processing and storage is created near the farm in the form of Primary Processing Centers (PPCs) and Collection Centers (CCs). Under the Scheme, the Centre provides financial assistance up to Rs 50 crore per mega food park project.
- **Problems with Indian food parks:** Promoters have faced difficulties in selling the new concept to banks and, as a result, have failed to secure loans to build the parks. Acquiring the 50 acres of land, which is mandatory under MFPS, has been another challenge that most developers have failed to address. Convincing small enterprises to set up shop at these facilities has not been easy.
- **Facts for Prelims:** India's first mega food park 'Sri Mega Food Park', sprawling 147-acre space, was opened in Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh in 2012.

Nirbhaya fund

- **The committee** also observed that funds for the construction of buildings should come from other sources and not from the Nirbhaya Fund.
- **About Nirbhaya fund:** The Rs 1,000 crore Nirbhaya Fund was announced in Union Budget 2013 by the then Finance Minister P Chidambaram.
- **The corpus** was to be utilised for upholding safety and dignity of women. Ministry of Women and Child Development apart from several other concerned ministries were authorised to work out details of structure, scope and application of this fund. The Fund is administered by Department of Economic Affairs of the finance ministry.
- **Issues with Nirbhaya Fund:** The government has been accused of keeping Nirbhaya Fund unutilised. With rise in cases of sexual harassment and crimes against women there is a crying need for implementation of such funds.
- **Way ahead:** Government should improve coordination between the ministries for speedier implementation of projects under the schemes of this nature. Delay caused by lengthy inter-ministerial coordination must not be allowed to compromise women's safety. The Government and legislators must act proactively on delivering equality and security to women.

Open Acreage Licensing Policy

- **With the launch** of the third bidding round, more than 1,20,000 sq km has now been made available for exploration in last one year under the OALP. The 23 blocks offered now are spread across states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, West Bengal, Nagaland, Tripura, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Some blocks are also in eastern and western offshore.
- **What is Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)?** The OALP, a critical part of the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy, provides uniform licences for exploration and production of all forms of hydrocarbons, enabling contractors to explore conventional as well as unconventional oil and gas resources.
- **Fields are offered** under a revenue-sharing model and throw up marketing and pricing freedom for crude oil and natural gas produced. Under the OALP, once an explorer selects areas after evaluating the National Data Repository (NDR) and submits the EoI, it is to be put up for competitive bidding and the entity offering the maximum share of oil and gas to the government is awarded the block.
- **NDR has been** created to provide explorers' data on the country's repositories, allowing them to choose fields according to their capabilities. Data received through the National Seismic Programme, an in-depth study of 26 sedimentary basins, are continuously being added to the NDR.
- **Background:** The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) replacing the erstwhile New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) was approved in March 2016 and the Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP) along with the National Data Repository (NDR) were launched in June 2017 as the key drivers to accelerate the Exploration and Production (E&P) activities in India. The main features of HELP are Revenue Sharing Contract, single Licence for exploration and production of conventional as well as unconventional Hydrocarbon resources, marketing & pricing freedom, etc.
- **What was the need for the new Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)?** India is the 3rd largest consumer of crude oil and petroleum products with oil and gas contributing 34.4% to primary energy consumption. In 2015-2016, India's crude oil import dependence rose to 81% from 78.5%. In last five years, India has seen overall decline in exploration and production of conventional resources.

- **New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP)** created in 1997 ended the state dominance and created a competitive environment leading to liberalization of oil and gas exploration and production industry. However, it failed to keep the momentum of production growth and attracting the foreign investment.
- **Bureaucratic** hurdles like multiple approvals and sanctions, cost overruns, and disputes led to some oil majors leaving their awarded blocks and exit from the space.

RBI restructuring package for small businesses

- **The scheme:** The scheme announced by RBI is a one-time scheme wherein a loan tenor and interest rate can be revised without classifying the asset as a NPA.
- **The facility** is available for standard advances of up to Rs 25 crore only. The scheme will help free up additional resources which will fuel demand and create further opportunities in the industry. The restructuring must be implemented by March 31, 2020. Banks will need to make a provision of 5% towards these restructured loans. Each bank/NBFC should formulate a policy for this scheme with board approval. Those MSMEs that are not exempt from GST will need to be registered on the GSTN on the date on restructuring.
- **What was the issue with MSMEs?** SMEs were the worst hit among various industry segments following demonetisation and implementation of the Goods and Services Tax. Availability of credit to MSMEs declined further after the IL&FS default crisis which led to bank credit to non-banking finance companies drying up. This in turn reduced the ability of NBFCs to lend to MSMEs.
- **The sector** was facing a liquidity problem because of lack of confidence of banks who had turned risk-averse in the wake of rising bad loans.
- **Significance of MSMEs and the need for creating an enabling environment:** MSMEs form an important component of the Indian economy and contribute significantly to the country's gross domestic product, exports, industrial output and employment generation. Considering the importance of MSMEs in the Indian economy, it is considered necessary at this juncture to take certain measures for creating an enabling environment for the sector.

Forest Rights Act

- **About Forest Rights Act (FRA):** The act was passed in December 2006. It deals with the rights of forest-dwelling communities over land and other resources. The Act grants legal recognition to the rights of traditional forest dwelling communities, partially correcting the injustice caused by the forest laws.
- **Rights under the Act:** Title rights – Ownership to land that is being farmed by tribals or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of 4 hectares; ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family, meaning that no new lands are granted. Use rights – to minor forest produce (also including ownership), to grazing areas, to pastoralist routes, etc.
- **Relief and development rights** – to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection. Forest management rights – to protect forests and wildlife.
- **Eligibility:** Eligibility to get rights under the Act is confined to those who “primarily reside in forests” and who depend on forests and forest land for a livelihood. Further, either the claimant must be a member of the Scheduled Tribes scheduled in that area or must have been residing in the forest for 75 years.
- **Process of recognition of rights:** The Act provides that the gram sabha, or village assembly, will initially pass a resolution recommending whose rights to which resources should be recognised.
- **This resolution** is then screened and approved at the level of the sub-division (or taluka) and subsequently at the district level. The screening committees consist of three government officials (Forest, Revenue and Tribal Welfare departments) and three elected members of the local body at that level. These committees also hear appeals.

In News- Vat Cau festival:

- **What is it?** Vat Cau is a centuries-old sport which began as a training exercise for soldiers in Vietnam and contains elements of wrestling and rugby.
- **Vat Cau** is the main draw of a three-day annual festival held during Vietnam's much celebrated Tet Lunar New Year. Dating back to the 11th century, the game was invented by a revered general to teach his recruits about the importance of teamwork, intelligence and strength when fighting against foreign invaders.
- **A single match** has four separate teams of eight men wearing waist straps of different colours. They tussle over a 17kg (37-pound) ball made from the wood of a jackfruit tree, laboriously inching it towards one of the holes dug in each team's corner.
- **Abu Dhabi includes Hindi as third official court language:** Context: Abu Dhabi has included Hindi as the third official language used in its courts, alongside Arabic and English, as part of a move designed to improve access to justice. This is aimed at helping Hindi speakers to learn about litigation procedures, their rights and duties without a language barrier.
- **The Indian** community in the UAE, numbering 2.6 million, constitutes 30% of the total population and is the largest expatriate community.
- **'DD Arunprabha':** What is it? It is a dedicated 24x7 Satellite channel for Arunachal Pradesh launched recently. It is the 24th satellite channel operated by Doordarshan. DD Arunprabha is the Doordarshan's second channel for the northeastern region; DD Northeast was the first one. The channel will familiarise people across India with the beauty and the culture of the State.
- **Film and Television Institute (FTI):** The permanent campus of Film and Television Institute will come up at Jollang-Rakap (Jote), Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh. It will be the first Film and Television Institute of entire North-East. This will be the third Film and Television Institute of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the first two being FTII Pune and SRFTI Kolkata. It will provide a boost to the talented youngsters of the North-East in film and television sector.
- **e-cocoon:** What is it? It is a mobile application launched by the Ministry of Textiles for quality certification in silkworm seed sector. E app will help quality certification in silk worm sector. It will be used by the Seed Analysts and Seed Officers nominated under Central Seed Act for system and product certification through real time reporting. Background: India is the second largest producer of silk after China and the largest consumer of silk. India's silk production capacity is expected to reach about 38,500 tonnes by 2020 from the current level of 32,000 tonnes.
- **Helina-Anti Tank Missile:** Context: The Helicopter-launched anti-tank missile Helina was successfully test fired from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur in Balasore district of Odisha.
- **Key features:** Indigenously designed and built, Helina is the air-launched variant of the Nag, a fire-and-forget ATGM with an estimated range of 4 kilometers. Range is estimated at between 7 to 8 kilometres. It is guided by an infrared imaging seeker (IIR) operating in the lock-on before-launch mode and helps in further strengthening the defence capabilities of the country.

Technology, globalization and the good jobs challenge:

- **Summary:** The editorial discusses about the need for creation of good jobs, need, challenges involved and ways to do so.
- **Good job- definition:** The definition of a good job depends on a country's level of economic development.
- **It is typically** a stable formal-sector position that comes with core labour protections such as safe working conditions, collective bargaining rights, and regulations against arbitrary dismissal. It enables at least a middle-class lifestyle, by that country's standards, with enough income for housing, food, transportation, education and other family expenses, as well as some saving.
- **Why create good jobs?** To achieve inclusive economic prosperity. To provide productive and dependable employment for the vast majority of a country's workforce.
- **Challenges to the creation of good jobs:** Low-skilled labour force: Production is becoming increasingly skill-intensive while the bulk of the labour force remains low-skilled. This generates a gap between the types of jobs that are created and the types of workers the country has.
- **Technology and globalization** have conspired to widen that gap, with manufacturing and services becoming increasingly automated and digitized. Intensification of economic dualism: Every economy is divided between an advanced segment, typically globally integrated, employing a minority of the labour force, and a low-productivity segment that absorbs the bulk of the workforce, often at low wages and under poor conditions. The former one is often at the safer side.
- **What needs to be done?** Need to improve employment conditions. Invest in skills and training. For time being, convince successful firms to employ more unskilled workers. Boosting an intermediate range of labour-intensive, low-skilled economic activities. Tourism and non-traditional agriculture are the prime examples of such labour-absorbing sectors.

- **Way ahead:** Government policy in developed and developing countries alike is too often preoccupied with boosting the most advanced technologies and promoting the most productive firms.
- **But failure** to generate good, middle-class jobs has very high social and political costs. Reducing those costs requires a different focus, geared specifically toward the kind of jobs that are aligned with an economy's prevailing skill composition.



Various steps have been taken to improve quality of teachers

- **As education** is in the Concurrent List of the Constitution, a majority of the schools are under the jurisdiction of respective States and Union Territories (UT). Hence, the recruitment, service conditions and deployment of teachers are primarily in the domain of respective State Governments and UT Administrations.
- **However**, Samagra Shiksha, a centrally sponsored scheme which has been launched in 2018-19 for the education sector extending from pre-school to class 12 by subsuming three erstwhile schemes i.e., Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE) has provisions for induction and in-service training of teachers.
- **The purpose of teachers'** training is not only improvement of skills but also to facilitate a shift in the understanding of teaching and learning as stipulated by the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005.
- **The RTE Act** also attaches immense significance to the role of teachers in improving elementary education by making available professionally trained teachers for the school system. Moreover, teacher training is provided for all levels of teachers from pre-primary to the higher secondary level.
- **In-service teacher** training is provided to elementary school teachers through the institutional structure of Block Resource Clusters and Cluster Resource Centers. Additionally, pre-service teacher training is provided to eligible candidates in Government Teacher Education Institutes like District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs).
- **The State Council** of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) prepares a combined annual teacher training calendar with active participation of various state agencies and is also the nodal agency in the state for conduct of Teacher Training. Accordingly, funds are provided to states and UTs for Teacher Training under Samagra Shiksha.
- **Section 23(2)** of The Right of Children to free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has been amended, according to which all untrained in-service elementary teachers are required to acquire minimum qualifications as laid down by the academic authority by 31st March, 2019.
- **The National Institute** of Open Schooling (NIOS) has been entrusted with the task of conducting the training of untrained in-service elementary teachers. 13,78,979 untrained in-service teachers have confirmed admissions at NIOS Portal. NIOS is conducting D.El.Ed. programme through Open Distance Learning (ODL) mode and SWAYAM platform. SWAYAMPURABHA DTH channels are also used for this purpose.
- **Further, a four year** B.Ed integrated course to bring about qualitative improvement in teacher education programmes in India has been conceptualised and regulations for this course has been published in official gazette on 22nd November, 2018. The model curriculum prepared for this course includes crucial aspects like Gender, Inclusive education, ICT, Yoga, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Health & Sanitation. The teaching specialization would primarily be for the primary levels and the secondary level.
- **In order to provide** supplementary learning material for students and for upgrading the skills of teachers, MHRD has developed a dedicated Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) platform. The high quality e-learning material both for students and teachers are being uploaded by Ministry and States/UTs on this portal. This is expected to substantially augment the knowledge base of the students and technical skills of teachers at no additional cost.

Defence Innovation Hubs

- **The Innovations** for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework of the Government envisages setting up and managing independent Defence Innovation Hubs (DIHs). These DIHs will serve as platforms where innovators can get information about needs and feedback from the Services directly and create solutions for India's major defence platforms. This structure is also geared towards attracting more innovators to work for the defence sector in India.
- **The Defence Innovation** Organisation set up under iDEX has announced setting up of two DIHs in Tamil Nadu (Coimbatore) and Maharashtra (Nashik).

- **The Framework to Fund Defence** Innovation Hubs under iDEX, approved by the Board of Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO) prescribes the following minimum criterion for setting up Defence Innovation Hubs:
- **Any Central Government** recognized Incubator including but not limited to: Department of Science and Technology (DST) recognized Incubators. Atal Innovation Mission, NITIAayog created Atal Incubation Centers (AICs) and Established Incubation Centers (EICs). Ministry of MSME recognized incubators.
- **Any other incubator** recognized or funded through any Central government scheme. The incubator located in districts mentioned in the list of SME clusters hosted by the Ministry of MSME in collaboration with UNIDO. Incubator / Hub promoted by local industry associations.

Government has reconstituted the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)

- **As per Rule 3** of Rules of ICHR, New Delhi, 1972, the Government has reconstituted the Council of Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi for a period of three years w.e.f. the date of the first meeting of the re-constituted Council i.e. 07.01.2019 to 06.01.2022 and the composition of the Council is as follows:
- **An eminent historian** nominated by the Government of India who shall be Chairman of the Council; Eighteen historians nominated by the Government of India; A Representative of the U.G.C;
- **Director-General of Archaeology**; Director, National Archives; Four persons to represent Government who shall be nominated by the Government of India and which shall include one representative each of the Ministry of Education, the Department of Culture and the Ministry of Finance; and Member Secretary.

Year end Review-2018: Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga National Mission for Clean Ganga(NMCG):

- **Ganga Rejuvenation:-** Under Namami Gange programme, a total of 254 projects worth Rs.24,672 crore have been sanctioned for various activities such as sewage infrastructure, ghats & crematoria development, river front development, river surface cleaning, institutional development, biodiversity conservation, afforestation, rural sanitation, and public participation.
- **131 projects out** of 254 were sanctioned for creation of 3076 MLD new sewage treatment plants (STPs), rehabilitation of 887 MLD of existing STPs and laying/rehabilitation of 4942 km sewer network for abatement of pollution in river Ganga and Yamuna.
- **In a paradigm** shift in sewage sector in the past one year, works on six STP projects (50 MLD in Varanasi, 82 MLD in Haridwar, 30 MLD at Mathura, 50 MLD at Kanpur, Unnao & Shuklaganj, 35 MLD at Farrukhabad and 72 MLD at Allahabad-Jhushi, Naini & Phaphamau) have been started under Hybrid Annuity PPP mode (HAM). Other projects sanctioned under HAM are Mirzapur Gazipur and Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh; Digha, Kankarbagh and Bhagalpur in Bihar; Kolkata, Howrah, Bally, Kamarhati and Baranagar in West Bengal.
- **For River Front Development**, works at 145 ghats and 53 crematoria are in progress and expected to be completed by March 2019.
- **For river surface cleaning**, 11 trash skimmers have been deployed at Haridwar, Garh Mukhteshwar, Kanpur, Varanasi, Allahabad, Patna, Sahibganj, Nabadwip, Howrah Delhi and Mathura-Vrindavan.
- **On rural sanitation front**, all 4465 villages on the bank of river Ganga have been made Open Defecation Free (ODF) and 10,83,688 Individual Household Toilets have been constructed by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS). NMCG has released Rs. 829.0 crore to MoDWS for this.
- **Total 6 no. of projects** on biodiversity conservation and restoration of aquatic biodiversity of river Ganga including Dolphin, Ghariyal, Otter, water birds and fish & fisheries have been taken up, out of which 2 projects have been completed.
- **Rs. 190.3 crores** has been sanctioned to the State Forest Departments of Ultrakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West-Bengal for the year 2018-19, as a part of the afforestation program in the Ganga basin.
- **Five State Ganga Committees** and 48 District Ganga Committees constituted for effective monitoring of projects and activities in the five Ganga states.

- **Participation of corporates** in Namami Gange grew stronger after successful completion of two road shows in London and Mumbai. Corporates have shown their interest and commitment towards cleaning of Ganga. Countries like Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Finland and Israel have shown keen interest in collaborating with the Indian government for river Ganga cleaning.
- **During the financial year 2018-19** (till 30.11.2018), National Mission for Clean Ganga has released Rs.1532.59 crore to the states, Central Public Sector Undertakings for the implementation of the programme, including expenditure incurred for establishment.
- **1.2 E-flow notification** The Central Government on October 10th 2018 notified the minimum environmental flows for River Ganga that has to be maintained at various locations on the river. Environmental flows are the acceptable flow regimes that are required to maintain a river in the desired environmental state or predetermined state. The notification issued by the Government will ensure that the river has at least the minimum required environmental flow of water even after the river flow gets diverted by projects and structures for purposes like irrigation, hydropower, domestic and industrial use etc. This was an important step taken towards maintaining the uninterrupted or Aviral flow of the river.
- **1.3 Sisamau drain interception** One of the major achievements in the state has been the recent interception and diversion of Sisamau Nala in Kanpur, the worst pollutant for river Ganga that emptied waste water from the tanneries into the river. 140 MLD water from this drain has been intercepted and is being diverted to an STP for treatment.

Industrial Pollution Management

- **961 Grossly Polluting Industries** (GPIs) have been identified on main stem of river Ganga after reinventorisation exercise carried out by CPCB (2017-18).
- **As on November, 2018**, out of 961 GPIs, 795 units have connected to Online Continuous Effluent Monitoring System (OCEMS) to CPCB server.
- **Out of 961 GPIs inspected**, 474 are found complying, 209 are found non-complying, 256 are found temporarily closed and 22 are found permanently closed. Action has been taken against 209 Non-Complying units wherein 199 units have been issued Show Cause Notice and 10 units have been issued closure directions.
- **Zero Liquid Discharge** achieved in 32 molasses based Distilleries. Due to adoption of advanced process technology, Spent wash generation in Distilleries reduced from 12-15 KL/KL to 8 KL/KL of alcohol production.
- **For Sugar industry**, Charter prepared and issued for the up gradation of the manufacturing process technology, ETP system and best practises and waste minimization practises.
- **In Pulp & Paper**, disposal of black liquor from agro-based industries has been prohibited and are permitted to operate with Chemical Recovery Plants (CRPs) to achieve zero black liquor discharge.
- **Estimated reduction** in fresh water consumption and effluent generation are about 45%-50% as compared to the pollution level estimated in 2012, in spite of expansion in production capacity and number of units in Pulp & Paper Sector.
- **Proposal for construction** of 20 MLD CETP, Collection and Conveyance system, Pilot-scale 200 KLD ZLD plant and 900 KLD Common Chrome Recovery unit at Jajmau tannery Cluster, Kanpur has been sanctioned amounting Rs.554 crores with certain financial conditions.
- **Proposal for up-gradation** of existing CETP at Mathura Textile cluster has been sanctioned amounting Rs.13.87 crores with a condition that industry has to contribute 25% of project cost and 100 % O&M.

Water Quality Monitoring

- **36 Real Time Water Quality** Monitoring Station (RTWQMS) are operational under Namami Gange programme.
- **Water quality monitoring** is carried out 130 locations. Dissolved Oxygen levels improved at 39 locations, Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) decreased at 42 locations and coliform bacteria count decreased at 47 locations (2017 vs 2018 data).
- **Bio-monitoring of river Ganga** at various locations (Haridwar to Diamond Harbour in West Bengal) has been carried out to study the Benthic Macro Invertebrates, which reflects the biological health of river. It has been observed that water quality of Ganga supports diversified community structure and the river stretches shows slight to moderate level of pollution with respect to Biological Water Quality Criteria (BWQC) which is a suggestive criteria considered by

CPCB. There has been improving trend in the biological water quality at some of the locations.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY):

- **PMKSY has been formulated** amalgamating ongoing schemes viz. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & 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).
- **Under PMKSY** Ninety Nine (99) ongoing Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) Major/Medium projects along with their Command Area Development & Water Management (CADWM) work shaving potential of 76.03 lakh ha. and estimated cost of Rs. 77595 cr. have been identified in consultation with States, 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.
- **Out of 99 Prioritized** AIBP Projects which were identified for completion in mission mode by December, 2019, State Governments have informed that CADWM works are either not required or deemed completed in respect of 9 such projects. Out of the remaining 90 projects, 86 projects have been included under the CADWM programme of PMKSY. The balance CCA in respect of these 86 included projects is about 42 lakh ha and the target CA is Rs.8176 crore while the total cost of these 86 projects is estimated as Rs.17,800 crore.

Surface Minor Irrigation (SMI) and Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies scheme:

- **Total Central Assistance** (CA) released to State Government under Surface Minor Irrigation (SMI) scheme was Rs. 665.35 crores during FY 2017-18 and Rs. 527.90 crores during FY 2018-19 (till 30.11.2018).
- **Total Central Assistance** (CA) released to State Government under Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies scheme was Rs 79.65 crores during FY 2017-18 and Rs. 22.10 crores during FY 2018-19 (till 30.11.2018).
- **Shahpur Kandi Dam Project:** An agreement was reached between Punjab and J&K states under the aegis of MoWR, RD&GR at New Delhi on 8th September, 2018 to resume works of Shahpur Kandi Dam project in Punjab on river Ravi. The work on the project has been suspended since 30.08.2014 following a dispute between the state of J&K and Punjab. Work has been resumed w.e.f. 1st November, 2018.
- **This project had been declared** as a National Project. The Union Cabinet on 6th December, 2018 has approved the proposal of this Ministry for extending a Central Assistance of Rs. 485.38 crore (for irrigation component) for implementation of this project. The project would be completed by June 2022.
- **This project will help in creation** of additional Irrigation Potential of 5000 ha in Punjab State and 32173 ha in J&K State and also efficient management of 1.18 Lac ha area under UBDC system in Punjab. Consequently, this project would help minimising some of the water of the River Ravi which at present is going waste through the Madhopur Headworks downstream to Pakistan.
- **Flood Management Programme (FMP):-** The subject of Flood Management including erosion control falls within the purview of the States. The flood management & anti-erosion schemes are planned, investigated and implemented by the State Governments with own resources as per priority within the State. The Union Government supplements the efforts of the States by way of technical guidance and promotional financial assistance in critical areas.
- **Government of India** launched a Flood Management Programme (FMP) during XI Plan for providing central assistance to the State Governments for taking up works related to river management, flood control, anti-erosion, drainage development, flood proofing works, restoration of damaged flood management works and anti-sea erosion works. Under this Programme, a central assistance of Rs.5435.74 crore has been provided up to 31.03.2018 to the various States/UTs.
- **"Flood Management Programme (FMP)" and "River Management Activities & Works related to Border Areas (RMBA)"** schemes have now been merged into single scheme "Flood Management and Border Areas Programme (FMBAP)" for three year period from 2017-18 to 2019-20. Till November, 2018 an amount of Rs. 367.94 crore has been released to States as grant-in-aid under FMBAP.
- **Farakka Barrage Project:** The Farakka Barrage Project (FBP) was commissioned in 1975 for preservation & maintenance of the Kolkata Port and for increasing the navigational depth of the Bhagirathi – Hooghly waterway. Since the Gates of FBP have outlived their economic life and serviceability, phase wise replacement of all the gates of main barrage and Head Regulator, remote control system, etc. have been under taken by FBP. So far 42 gates of the Farakka Barrage have been replaced with new gates and the work of replacement of remaining gates has been taken up by FBP in phased manner. The work for Special Repair and maintenance of PSC Road Bridge over Farakka Barage has been awarded by FBP and work is underway.

- **Lakhwar project: A Memorandum** of Understanding was signed on 28th August 2018 between Shri Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Shipping and Road Transport & Highways and Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh for the construction of Rs. 3966.51 crore Lakhwar Multi-Purpose project in the Upper Yamuna Basin. The Lakhwar project was initially approved in 1976 but work on the project was suspended in 1992.
- **The Lakhwar project envisages** construction of a 204 m high concrete dam across river Yamuna near Lohari village in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand with a live storage capacity of 330.66 MCM. This storage will provide irrigation for 33,780 hectares land and availability of 78.83 MCM water for domestic, drinking and industrial use in the six basin states. The project will also generate 300 MW of power. The project is to be executed by M/s Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (UJVL).

Interlinking of Rivers (ILRs):

- **National Perspective Plan (NPP) proposals:** Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) of three priority links have been completed viz. Ken-Betwa link project (Phase-I&II), Damanganga-Pinjal link project and Par-Tapi-Narmada link project. Various Statutory/other Clearances viz., Environmental clearance, Stage-I forest land diversion clearance, Wildlife, MoTA, techno-economic and investment clearances have been accorded/obtained by/from concerned Ministries/Departments for KBLP Phase-I and the project report is ready for implementation.
- **Environmental clearance**, Forest Land Diversion clearance for Lower Orr dam has been recommended by EAC and FAC of MoEF&CC. MoTA has accorded clearance for R&R plan of PAFs of Lower Orr dam subject to certain conditions. Environmental clearance and Forest clearance for Bina complex projects were accorded by MoEF&CC.
- **Hon'ble Minister (WR, RD & GR)** has discussed KBLP with Chief Ministers of UP and MP and MoU for water sharing and implementation is expected to be signed shortly. Further, Hon'ble Minister (WR, RD & GR) has discussed Damanganga-Pinjal link and Par-Tapi-Narmada link projects with Chief Ministers of Gujarat and Maharashtra and shortly the MoU for water sharing is expected to be signed in this regard.
- **Hon'ble Minister(WR,RD&GR)** held discussions with Hon'ble Minister for Water Resources of Chhattisgarh about the alternate study of diversion of unutilized flood flows of Chhattisgarh in Indravati sub-basin of Godavari basin(as per GWDT Award) through Godavari-Cauvery (Grand Anicut) link project. The DPR of this alternate study is under progress.

Intra-State link proposals:

- **DPRs of four intra-state link projects viz.**, Burhi Gandak-Noon-Baya-Ganga link and Kosi-Mechi link of Bihar State, Ponnaiyar-Palar link of Tamil Nadu and Wainganga (Gosikhurd)-Nalganga(Purna/Tapi) link project of Maharashtra have been completed and sent to respective States. Preparation of DPRs of Damanganga (Ekdare)-Godavari and Damanganga(Vagh/Val)-Vaitarna-Godavari (Kadva Dev) link projects of Maharashtra are under progress.
- **Completion of balance works of North Koel Reservoir Project, Bihar and Jharkhand:** The Ministry of Water Resources, RD & GR has taken up the work on completion of balance works of North Koel Reservoir Project, Bihar and Jharkhand which was halted in 1993. The Union Cabinet in August 2017 has approved the proposal at an estimated cost of Rs 1622.27 crore during three financial years from the start of the project.
- **The cabinet** also approved execution of balance works of the project on turnkey basis by M/s WAPCOS Ltd., as Project Management Consultant (PMC).The Government of India will provide assistance as central share of Rs. 1378.61 crore and State Government of Bihar and Jharkhand will arrange Rs.212.43 crores and Rs.31.23 crore respectively.
- **The project aims** to provide additional irrigation to 39,801 hectares of land annually in the drought prone areas of Aurangabad & Gaya districts of Bihar, Palamu & Garhwa districts of Jharkhand.
- **The works on the Mohammadganj** barrage and Left Main Canal of the project are underway. Stage-II forest clearance has been accorded by MoEF&CC, Govt. of India.
- **Central assistance** of Rs. 582.70 crore has been released for the implementation of the project during the year 2018-19.

Minor Irrigation Census :

- **Ministry conducts** Minor Irrigation (MI) Census in order to create a sound and reliable database on ground water and surface water Minor Irrigation Schemes in the country. Ministry provides 100% financial assistance and technical guidance to States/UTs for conduct of the Census.

6th Minor Irrigation Census & Census of Water Bodies

- **i. Ministry initiated** the process of conduct of Census of Water Bodies for the first time in convergence with 6th MI Census in order to build up a database on Water Bodies.
- **ii. Preparatory work** like drafting of schedules, instruction manual, operational guidelines etc. has been completed duly approved by the Steering Committee in January, 2018.
- **iii. All India Training** workshops for 6th MI Census & Census of Water Bodies was organized on 16th March, 2018. Representatives from most of the States/UTs attended the training workshop.
- **iv. Census** material for the 6th MI Census and Census of Water Bodies, viz. final Schedules, instructions and table scrutiny points etc. was sent to States/UTs for taking further action.
- **v. Six two days** Regional Training workshops for 6th Minor Irrigation and census of water bodies during the month of June, 2018 to August, 2018 were completed. Continuous monitoring is being done for completion of various pre-field work activities viz. training by States, printing of schedules, purchase of mobile device etc.
- **vi. Process of development** of software for data entry portal with built in monitoring mechanism and mobile app for geo tagging for water bodies is near completion.

National Aquifer Management (NAQUIM):

- **The NAQUIM programme** for mapping of water bearing aquifers has been planned with an aim to enhance the capacity of states in Ground Water Management and Development. Total targeted area for National Aquifer Mapping and Management Programme is 12.91 lakh Sq. Km upto March, 2020 against ~24 Lakh Sq.Km area identified for mapping in the country. By the end of October 2018, aquifer maps and management plans have been developed for an area of 8.91 lakh Sq. Km, which is shared/would be shared with the respective State Governments agencies.

Development of Water Resources Information System (DWRIS) :

- **DWRIS Scheme** is a continuing scheme of XII five year plan which is under implementation for creation of reliable and sound database for planning and policy formulation for Water Resources Projects, timely dissemination of flood forecast, etc.
- **Achievements under DWRIS during 2018:** i. 319 new Hydrological Observation sites fully operationalized ii. 23 new flood forecasting stations opened iii. Telemetry installed on 87 sites for automatic data acquisition and satellite based data transmission system
- **iv. Telemetry systems upgraded on 85 sites** v. Inflow models for Ranjitsagar Dam have been developed and models for 271 previously developed improved during data collected in monsoon season.
- **vi. Inundation models for Brahmaputra River have been developed.** vii. 6791 flood forecasts bulletins issued during 2018-19 monsoon season.

Hydro-Meteorological Data Dissemination Policy, 2018

- **Hydro-Meteorological Data Dissemination Policy, 2018** has been formulated by this Ministry which deals with the issue of dissemination of hydro-meteorological data collected by CWC and CGWB, classification of hydro-meteorological data, Data User Categories, custodian of hydro-meteorological data and procedure for release of classified & unclassified hydro-meteorological data.
- **A copy of Hydro-Meteorological Data Dissemination Policy, 2018** is available on Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation website at <http://mowr.gov.in/hydro-meteorological-data-dissemination-policy-2018>.
- **Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Programme (DRIP): Targets & Progress:** In the year 2018-19 Dam Break Analysis were conducted on 38 Dams for preparation of Inundation maps. The 57 draft Emergency Action Plan (EAPs) prepared by State Implementing Agencies(IAs) have been reviewed and commented upon by the Central Project Monitoring Unit(CPMU) out of 64 submitted.
- **Total of 81 Notice Inviting Tenders (NITs)** worth Rs. 126 Cr. were issued in the year 2018-19 and works of 76 packages worth Rs. 744 Cr. were awarded till date. During this period, an expenditure of Rs. 1050.7 Cr. was incurred. DHARMA, a web based dam inventory management software has been completed.
- **Preparation of Guidelines & Manual:** 2 Guidelines on various aspects of dam safety have been prepared under the project and released during the conference. 2 model Operation and Maintenance Manual for Almatti Dam, Karnataka WRD and Maithon dam, DVC have been prepared as a reference document for guiding DRIP Implementing Agencies for preparing O & M Manual for other DRIP dams. Model EAP of Hirakud Dam has been prepared and shared with all IAs for replicating these protocols for other DRIP dams.
- **DRIP-II:** In order to cover more States of India under the umbrella of DRIP, CWC has submitted a proposal for new DRIP (i.e. DRIP-II), which is under consideration of the Ministry. So far 18 States and 2 Central Agencies viz. CWC and BBMP have submitted the proposal. The overall cost of DRIP-II as received from all States / Central Agencies is Rs.11487 Cr. with 733 dams. The DRIP-II is proposed to be a Scheme of 10 years, to be implementing on two phases i.e. Phase-II and Phase-III, each of six years duration.

Polavaram Project Authority (PPA):

- **Brahmaputra Board:** The following anti-erosion and flood protection schemes were completed during the year: Phase-II and III works of the scheme "Protection of Majuli Island" in Assam Protection of Masalabari International Border area in the district of Dhubri, Assam
- **Jengrai drainage development scheme** Jakaichuk drainage development scheme 3 Sub-basin Master Plans viz. Jaldhaka, Simsang and Torsa were approved by Government of India (GoI).
- **A Seminar inaugurated by Secretary,** MoWR, RD & GR on "Synergy among organizations working in Water Resources Sector in North Eastern Region" was held on 27.09.2018 wherein 79 delegates of 37 Central as well as State Government Departments/ Organizations/ Academic Institutes participated. On agreement of participants, Brahmaputra Board is taking up to create a Data Sharing Centre where data can be shared safely by the organizations.
- **During the year 2018** under Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan (SBA), Brahmaputra Board organized the following programmes- Art and Essay writing Competitions amongst school students.
- **Cleanliness drive through 'Shramdaan'** at public places, schools and offices. Brahmaputra Board has taken up two Ghats for development in Majuli Island viz., Kamalabari and Aphalamukh and to provide necessary sanitation facilities and other safe access facilities to Commuters to Majuli Island from Neamatighat under SBA.

National Projects Construction Corporation Limited (NPCC):

- **NPCC was established** on 9th January 1957 as a premier construction company to create necessary infrastructure for economic development of the country.

- **Mini Ratna Status:** "Miniratna - I" status awarded to NPPC Limited by Ministry of Water Resources RD & GR on 05-11-2018.
- **NPPC is an ISO 9001-2015 Organization with Pan India presence. Major Works Secured during 2018-19** Construction of Kendriya Vidyalaya at Various locations across Country. Construction for Up gradation of ITI at Jabalpur, Rew Sagar & Shadol for MP Housing Board. Bone & Joint Hospital Srinagar. Establishment of Industrial Biotech Parks(ITBP) at 02 locations in J&K Region for CSIR.
- **Building Works in CGWB (MOWR, RD & GR) Ahmadabad, Ambala and Jammu.** Indoor Sports Complex and Food Court of IIT Kharagpur in West Bengal. Construction of LS, US Quarter & Site Development of Police Line Campus at Pakur, Jharkhand. Development of Mandiri Nala under Patna Smart City Mission at Patna.
- **Major Works Completed during 2018-19 PMGSY Road Works in Paschim Medinipur.** PMGSY Roads at different locations in Jharkhand. Construction of Toilets at schools in different dist. Of Odisha (SVA) MCL. Construction of various buildings for Assam Rifles. Construction of BOP, Roads & Fencing Works for MHA. Construction of flood lighting works for MHA. Dolaithabi Barrage, Manipur.
- **PMGSY Roads (640 in No.) in 6 districts of Bihar i.e Bhojpur, Buxar, Rohtas, Kaimur, Patna, Nalanda.** Development and Construction of various buildings for Indira Gandhi National Tribal University Campus at Amarkanthak (M.P).
- **Proposed Schemes which are under consideration in the Ministry:** Incentivisation Scheme for Bridging Irrigation Gap (ISBIG) :- The Expenditure Finance Committee has approved the EFC memo of ISBIG Scheme for a restricted CCA of 50 lakh ha at an estimated cost of Rs.30,485 crore. CCEA note has been submitted and the Scheme is under consideration of the Government. After obtaining approval of the Cabinet, the Scheme shall become operational.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)- Har Khet ko Pani (HKKP) –Ground Water

- **The scheme of PMKSY** approved in 2015 envisaged ground water development through tube well/ dug well etc. to cover 2.5 lakh hectare during 2015-16 to 2019-20.
- **The guidelines of the scheme** has been revised for already approved scheme for 2015-20 and circulated to all the States and UTs for submitting proposals/ DPRs in accordance with the revised operating guidelines. Under the scheme irrigation facilities will be created through tube wells, dug wells, bore wells and Dug cum Bore wells etc in SAFE assessment units characterised by Less than 60 per cent of Stage of Ground Water Development and there is scope for further groundwater development without endangering groundwater sustainability.
- **Average annual rainfall of more than 750 mm and** Groundwater levels are less than 15 m bgl. Possibilities of convergence with PMKSY-Watershed Component, MGNREGA or any other similar scheme of Central/ State for supporting water harvesting and groundwater recharge interventions for sustaining long term groundwater development to be undertaken .
- **Under the scheme** following components are proposed to be funded: Construction cost of well with material Cost of Pump (Electric and Solar) Cost of 200 m canvas pipe for water distribution Cost of investigation for site selection.
- **Provision of 75% Electric ad 25% solar pumps have been kept in a cluster/proposal.** A provision of Rs 200 crore has been kept towards the Central Assistance for the FY 2019-20 for Ground water irrigation under PMKSY-HKKP.

- **Proposal of Maharashtra for special package to drought prone districts:** Cabinet has approved the inclusion of 83 Surface Minor Irrigation and 8 Major / Medium Irrigation projects in the Special Package for Maharashtra during the meeting of the CCEA held on 18.07.2018.Under the Special Package, the Central Government will provide Central Assistance (CA) @ 25% of the balance cost of these 91 projects as on 1.4.18 as well as 25% reimbursement for the expenditure incurred during 2017-18 keeping in view that funding of these projects is under consideration since 2017-18.The overall balance cost of the said projects as on 1.4.2018 is estimated to be Rs.13651.61 crore.
- **Relining of Sirhind Feeder (SF) from RD 119700 to 447927 and Rajasthan Feeder (RF) from RD 179000 to 496000 of Punjab :** Cabinet has approved the funding of Relining of Sirhind Feeder and relining of Rajasthan Feeder of Punjab etc vide its meeting dated 26.09.2018. The approved cost of relining of Sirhind Feeder Canal is Rs. 671.478 Cr and that of relining of Rajasthan Feeder Canal is Rs. 1305.267 Cr, of the total estimated cost, Rs. 826.168 Cr would be provided as Central Assistance (Rs. 205.758 Cr for Sirhind Feeder and Rs. 620.41 Cr for Rajasthan Feeder) in addition to Rs 156 crore of central assistance earlier released for these projects.

- **The project would be completed in 3 working seasons (March to June) of 70 days each starting from March-June, 2019 and ending March-June, 2021.** Proposal for Diversion of Godavari waters upto Cauvery basin: As per the Planning of the Peninsular Component of the National Perspective Plan (NPP) about 20,796 MCM of water from Mahanadi and Godavari rivers is to be transferred through the nine link system namely (i) Mahanadi – Godavari link (ii) Inchampalli – Nagarjunasagar link (iii) Inchampalli – Pulichintala link (iv) Polavaram – Vijayawada link (implemented by Government of Andhra Pradesh) (v) Almatti – Pennar link (vi) Srisaïlam – Pennar Link (vii) Nagarjunasagar – Somasila link (viii) Somasila – Grand Anicut link and (ix) Cauvery – Vaigai – Gundar link to Krishna, Pennar, Cauvery, Vaigai and Gundar basins.
- **Pending consensus** on Manibhadra dam across Mahanadi and Inchampalli dam across Godavari due to large submergence involved and quantity of water diversion from these basins, alternative studies to divert unutilized water share of Chhattisgarh State in Indravati sub-basin of Godavari basin (as per GWDT Award) to Cauvery river through Godavari-Cauvery link project have been carried out. The Technical Feasibility Note of the Godavari (Akinapalli)-Cauvery(Grand Anicut) link project has been submitted to party States during December 2017. Draft MoA for preparation of DPR has also been sent to party States during February 2018. The proposal was discussed in the Regional Conferences on Water Resources held at Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai.
- **Hon'ble Minister (WR, RD&GR)** held discussions with Hon'ble Minister for Water Resources of Chhattisgarh about this alternate study of Godavari-Cauvery (Grand Anicut) link project. The DPR of this alternate study is under progress.
- **Once the Mahanadi-Godavari** link materialises, the remaining links of the nine link system will be taken up.

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Schemes of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment for various sections

- **The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment** has launched the 'Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)' on 1st April, 2017 with an objective to provide senior citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from age related disabilities/ infirmities, with physical aids and assisted living devices such as walking sticks, elbow crutches, walkers/ crutches, tripods/ quad-pods, hearing aids, wheelchairs, artificial dentures and spectacles free of cost to the beneficiary senior citizens.
- **The scheme** is entirely funded from the Senior Citizen's Welfare Fund (SCWF). Under the Scheme funds are not released to the different States/UTs but to the sole Implemented Agency i.e. 'Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO)', a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **The following scholarship** schemes have been introduced by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities during the last three years- Top Class Education (for Graduate degree/Post-graduate degree/ diploma in notified institutes of excellence in education) – 2015-16, and Free Coaching (for students appearing in competitive examinations for Government jobs and admission to technical and professional courses) – 2017-18.
- **The fund in respect of Rashtriya Vayoshree** Yojana is released to the implementing agency i.e. ALIMCO for organizing Assessment / Distribution Camps throughout the country. The funds released under the scheme during 2017-18 is Rs.17.5 crore and Rs.53.25 crore during 2018-19.
- **In so far as schemes of Top Class** Education and Free Coaching for Students with Disabilities (SwDs) are concerned State/UT-wise funds are not allocated. However, in case of Top Class Education for SwDs, the number of slots of scholarships are distributed among all the States and Union Territories.
- **The number of slots available** to any State/UT is decided on the basis of percentage of population of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) of that State/UT in comparison to the total PwD population of India.
- **In case** the number of scholarships so allocated to a State/UT is not fully utilized, due to non-availability of eligible candidates, the unutilized slots are allocated amongst the other States/UTs where the number of eligible candidates is more than the slots allocated to that State/UT.

India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative

- **India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative:** The Initiative will combat marine pollution, which is one of the fastest growing environmental concerns.
- **Both countries** will share experiences, competence and collaborate on efforts to develop clean and healthy oceans. Both the sides will jointly collaborate for sustainable use of ocean resources and growth in the blue economy.
- **Through a range** of implementing partners, this initiative will seek to support local governments in implementing sustainable waste management practices, develop systems for collecting and analysing information about sources and scope of marine pollution.
- **They will also** work towards beach clean-up efforts, awareness raising campaigns and pilot project using plastic waste as fuel substitution for coal in cement production.
- **Bilateral efforts in this regard:** In January, 2019, the Indian and Norwegian governments agreed to work more closely on oceans by signing a MoU and establishing the India-Norway Ocean Dialogue during the Norwegian Prime Minister's visit to India in January.
- **A joint Task Force** on Blue Economy with government officials, researchers and experts as well as private sector was established to develop sustainable solutions within strategic areas of the blue economy, such as maritime and marine sector in addition to energy sector.

- **Causes of marine pollution:** Major sources of marine pollution are the inflow of chemicals, solid waste, discharge of radioactive elements, industrial and agricultural effluents, man-made sedimentation, oil spills, and many such factors. The majority portion of the marine pollution comes from the land that contributes to 80% of the marine pollution, air pollution also carries pesticides from farms and dust into the marine waters.
- **Types of marine pollution:** Eutrophication Acidification Toxins Plastics
- **Effects of Marine Pollution:** The contamination of water by excessive nutrients is known as nutrient pollution, a type of water pollution that affects the life under water. When excess nutrients like nitrates or phosphates get dissolved with the water it causes the eutrophication of surface waters, as it stimulates the growth of algae due to excess nutrients.
- **Most of Benthic animals** and plankton are either filter feeders or deposit feeders take up the tiny particles that adhere to potentially toxic chemicals. In the ocean food chains, such toxins get concentrated upward. This makes estuaries anoxic as many particles combine chemically deplete of oxygen.
- **When the marine ecosystem** absorbs the pesticides, they are incorporated into the food webs of the marine ecosystem. After getting dissolved in the marine food webs, these harmful pesticides causes mutations, and also results in diseases, which can damage the entire food web and cause harm to the humans.
- **When toxic metals** are dumped or flown into the oceans through drains, it engulfs within the marine food webs. These can cause a change to tissue matter, biochemistry, behavior, reproduction, and suppress and alter the marine life's growth.
- **Marine toxins** can be transferred to several animals feeding on the fish or fish hydrolysate as a meal, toxins are then transferred to dairy products and meat of these affected land animals.

Constitutional and Legislative Measures to Protect and Safeguard Land Rights of Scheduled Tribes

- **To protect and safeguarding** the land rights and other rights of Scheduled Tribes, following constitutional and legislative measure have been put in place: "The Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006" to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land to forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes.
- **"Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013"** (RFCTLARR Act, 2013) safeguards against displacement of Scheduled Tribes.
- **"The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996"**, also provides that the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas or development projects and before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects in the Scheduled Areas; the actual planning and implementation of the projects in the Scheduled Areas shall be coordinated at the State Level.
- **Constitutional** provisions under Schedule – V also provide for safeguards against displacement of tribal population because of land acquisitions etc. The Governor of the State, having scheduled Areas, is empowered to prohibit or restrict transfer of land from tribals and regulate the allotment of land to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such cases. Land being a State subject, various provisions of rehabilitation and resettlement as per the RFCTLARR Act, 2013 are implemented by the concerned State Governments.
- **"The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987"** provides for legal services to members of Scheduled Tribes. "The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989" has been introduced to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, to provide for the trial of such offences and for the relief of rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- **Apart from the above**, this Ministry being the nodal Ministry for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes, implements several schemes and programmes for upliftment and development of Scheduled Tribes in the country.

'GiveltUp' campaign

- **About the campaign:** 'Give it Up' scheme encourages well-to-do households to voluntarily give up their liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) subsidy so that it could be targeted to the poor who remain reliant on polluting cooking fuels such as wood, dung, crop residues and coal.

- **The money surrendered** under this movement will be utilised for poor to get LPG connection in rural as well as in urban areas who are still using firewood for cooking.

Promotion and Protection of Maithili Language and its scripts

- **Context:** A committee constituted for making a report for the Promotion and Protection of Maithili Language and its scripts, has submitted its report to MHRD in which it has made several recommendations for promotion and protection of Maithili language.
- **Important recommendations of the committee are as follows:** To establish a Script and Manuscript Centre at Darbhanga in any one of the Universities viz. Kameshwar Singh Sanskrit University or Lalit Narayan Mithila University.
- **Early completion** of the work pertaining to Unicode Scripts of Mithilakshar by Technology Development of Indian Languages (TDIL) and To prepare audio-visual teaching materials for teaching the Mithilakshar scripts.
- **Background:** Mithilakshar or Tirhuta is the script of broader cultural Mithila. It is an extremely ancient script and is one of the scripts of the broader North Eastern India. The scripts of Mithilakshar, Bangla, Assamese, Nebari, Odia and Tibetan are part of the family.
- **Mithilakshar** had come to its current shape by 10th Century AD. The oldest form of Mithilakshar is found in the Sahodara stone inscriptions of 950 AD. Afterwards, the script has been used throughout Mithila from Champaran to Deogarh.
- **Need for protection:** Use of this script has been on decline since last 100 years and therefore our culture is getting decimated. Because its own script is not being used, the Maithili language is getting developed in a composite manner despite having been accorded a constitutional status in the constitution.

“Light House Projects challenge”

- **Key facts:** The winning six States/ UTs that score the highest marks across the prescribed criteria will be awarded lighthouse projects. The States/ UTs will receive Central Assistance to construct these projects as per PMAY (U) guidelines.
- **In addition to this,** a Technology Innovation Grant (TIG) for the States/ UTs is provisioned to offset the impact of any additional cost implication due to the use of new technology and to absorb the issues related to economies of scale and other related factors.
- **The selected sites** for lighthouse projects will be used as an ‘open laboratory’ for live demonstration and will receive due attention from academia (Civil Engineering, Planning, Architecture), practitioners (Public/ Private), policy makers (Central/ State) and media apart from felicitation/ recognition in Grand Expo-cum-Conference.
- **“Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC- India)”:** The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has already launched a “Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC- India)”.
- **The challenge** has three components viz. i) Conduct of Grand Expo-cum-Conference, ii) Identifying Proven Demonstrable Technologies from across the globe and iii) Promoting Potential Technologies through the establishment of Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators- India (ASHA-I) for incubation and accelerator support.

Defence Innovation Hubs

- **About Defence Innovation Hubs (DIHs):** The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework of the Government envisages setting up and managing independent Defence Innovation Hubs (DIHs).

- **These DIHs** will serve as platforms where innovators can get information about needs and feedback from the Services directly and create solutions for India's major defence platforms. This structure is also geared towards attracting more innovators to work for the defence sector in India.
- **The Framework** to Fund Defence Innovation Hubs under iDEX, approved by the Board of Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO) prescribes the following minimum criterion for setting up Defence Innovation Hubs:
- **Any Central Government recognized Incubator including but not limited to:** Department of Science and Technology (DST) recognized Incubators. Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog created Atal Incubation Centers (AICs) and Established Incubation Centers (EICs).
- **Ministry of MSME recognized incubators.** Any other incubator recognized or funded through any Central government scheme. The incubator located in districts mentioned in the list of SME clusters hosted by the Ministry of MSME in collaboration with UNIDO. Incubator / Hub promoted by local industry associations.

National Productivity Week

- **Context:** National Productivity Council (NPC), an autonomous registered society under Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, NPC is celebrating its 61st Foundation Day on 12th February with the theme "Circular Economy for Productivity & Sustainability".
- **NPC observes foundation day** as Productivity Day and the National Productivity Week from February 12-18, 2019.
- **Significance of the theme:** This year theme represents a unique opportunity for circular business model for Make à Use à Return. It presents an opportunity for long term economic prospects and regeneration of materials. Transitioning to an efficient circular economy will benefit industry and all stakeholders now and in future.
- **What is circular economy and why is it important?** The circular economy follows the principle of preservation and enhancement of natural capital by controlling finite stocks and balancing renewable resource flows. The other principles suggest optimizing of resource yields by circulating products, components, and materials at their highest utility at all times, in both technical and biological cycles.
- **Circular economy** has the potential to increase productivity and create jobs, whilst reducing carbon emissions and preserving valuable raw materials. It provides for a way of creating value. It works by extending product life span through improved design and servicing and relocating waste from the end of the supply chain to the beginning – in effect, using resources more efficiently by using them over and over.
- **About NPC: NPC is national level organization to promote productivity culture in India.** Established by the Ministry of Industry, Government of India in 1958. It is an autonomous, multipartite, non-profit organization with equal representation from employers' & workers' organizations and Government, apart from technical & professional institutions and other interests.
- **NPC is a constituent** of the Tokyo-based Asian Productivity Organisation (APO), an Inter Governmental Body, of which the Government of India is a founder member.
- **Functions:** NPC teams up with its clients to work out solutions towards accelerating productivity, enhancing competitiveness, increasing profits, augmenting safety and reliability and ensuring better quality. It provides reliable database for decision-making, improved systems and procedures, work culture as well as customer satisfaction both internal & external.

Akshaya Patra Foundation

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently unveiled a ceremonial plaque to mark the serving of "3rd billionth meal" by Akshaya Patra Foundation at Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir campus.
- **About Akshaya Patra:** Funded by International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Akshaya Patra is a Bengaluru-based not-for-profit organisation that works with the government on mid-day meal schemes. It has a state-of-the-art kitchen in Vrindavan.
- **Today,** Akshaya Patra is the world's largest (not-for-profit run) Mid-Day Meal Programme serving wholesome food every school day to over 1.76 million children from 14,702 schools across 12 states in India.

National Gas Grid

- **The objectives of the National Gas Grid are:** To remove regional imbalance within the country with regard to access for natural gas and provide clean and green fuel throughout the country.
- **To connect gas** sources to major demand centres and ensure availability of gas to consumers in various sectors. Development of City Gas Distribution Networks in various cities for the supply of CNG and PNG.
- **Significance:** The National Gas Grid together with providing gas connections to households will provide better infrastructure for automobiles using gas. The National Gas Grid will also aid in renewing of the fertilizer sector and also give a boost to the Power and Automotive sector.

Rajasthan to scrap education criterion

- **What's the issue?** The education criteria was introduced by the previous government, which stipulated that for contesting the zila parishad or panchayat samiti polls, a contestant must have a minimum qualification of secondary education (Class X).
- **To contest** the sarpanch elections, an aspirant from the general category must have passed Class VIII and a SC/ST aspirant must have passed Class V.
- **Why has it been scrapped?** Few experts are of the opinion that the requirement of minimum qualification for contesting elections is against the very spirit of 73rd and 74th amendments. It also violates the right of every citizen to vote and to contest elections, which form the basic structure of the constitution.
- **It may be noted** here that due to these restrictions, many able candidates were debarred from contesting elections. In one way, it can be said that this law has prevented many people from coming to the mainstream.
- **What has the Supreme Court said in this regard?** Even Haryana had passed a similar law mandating minimum education qualification for those contesting in Panchayat Raj Institutions. The constitutional validity of this law of Haryana was questioned in the Supreme Court.
- **The Supreme Court** had upheld the constitutional validity of the law enacted by Haryana government to bar the illiterate from contesting panchayat polls in the state. The Supreme Court had ruled that "it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad".
- **The Supreme Court's** interpretation is based on the fact that uneducated or illiterate people getting elected to the local bodies can easily be misled by officials if they don't know to write and read. In such cases, administrative actions that they are going can pose many challenges. The Court has further observed that it is only the education which can give people the power to differentiate between right and wrong, and good and bad.
- **Background:** Rajasthan Literacy Rate 2011: Literacy rate in Rajasthan has seen upward trend and is 66.11 percent as per 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 79.19 percent while female literacy is at 52.12 percent. In 2001, literacy rate in Rajasthan stood at 60.41 percent.

Bill to counter exploitation by NRI spouses

- **Highlights of the Bill:** The Bill is aimed at prevent victimisation of Indian nationals in fraudulent marriages.
- **The Bill** will create accountability and protect those who are trapped in fraudulent marriages and are abandoned by their spouses. According to the new Bill, a marriage between an NRI and an Indian citizen will have to be registered within 30 days from the date of marriage.
- **Necessary** legal provisions have been created in the criminal code and the Passports Act, 1967, to initiate action against erring NRI spouses.

- **What necessitated this?** The introduction of the Bill was necessitated by the Ministry of External Affairs due to numerous complaints received from Indian nationals, mostly women deserted or harassed by their Non-Resident Indian spouses. It is expected that the Bill will serve as a deterrent for NRI spouses, who use marriages as a tool of exploitation.

LAWASIA Human Rights Conference

- **The conference** aims to provide a unique opportunity for lawyers and associated professional members to exchange insights and expertise on topics of significant importance to all. Theme: "State Power, Business and Human Rights: Contemporary Challenges".
- **The conference** explored a wide range of human rights issues of relevance in the Asia Pacific region.
- **About LAWASIA:** It is a regional association of lawyers, judges, jurists and legal organisations and it advocates for the interests and concerns of the Asia Pacific legal profession.
- **It provides** a platform to promote the cross-jurisdictional exchange of legal knowledge; as a voice of the legal profession; and as a conduit for encouraging adherence to mutually-held principles of the rule of law, professional integrity and the protection of human rights.

African Union

- **About AU:** The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of 55 countries of the continent of Africa, with exception of various territories of European possessions located in Africa. The bloc was founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa.
- **The intention** of the AU is to replace the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa by 32 signatory governments. The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states.
- **The AU's secretariat** the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa. Key objectives: To achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and Africans. To defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States. To accelerate the political and social-economic integration of the continent.

40th anniversary of Iran revolution

- **Iran marks 40th anniversary of Islamic revolution. About the Iranian Revolution:** Iranian Revolution, also known as Islamic Revolution or the 1979 Revolution, was a series of events involving the overthrow of the monarch of Iran, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, and replacing his government with an Islamic republic under the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a leader of one of the factions in the revolt.
- **The reason** for the revolution was to stop the oppression under the western secular policies.
- **The movement** against the United States-backed monarchy was supported by various leftist and Islamist organizations and student movements.
- **Outcome:** A multiclass opposition overthrew an autocratic ruler, leading to the establishment of a theocratic state. This outcome contrasts sharply with other modern revolutionary movements, which have been fought in the name of nationalism or socialism and which have concluded with the transfer of power to a secular, modernizing intelligentsia.

DRDO's 'Dare to Dream' contest:

- **Context:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has launched 'Dare to Dream', a contest to encourage startups and individuals to come up with innovative defence and aerospace technologies.
- **Applicants** are invited to send innovative, workable proposals that can impact various related domains. The winning entries, which should specify the plan of executing it into a prototype, stand to get one of five prizes ranging from ₹3 lakh to ₹10 lakh in two categories.
- **The military R&D organisation** has asked for solutions in the areas of Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Systems, Cybersecurity, Hypersonic Technologies, Smart Materials, Quantum Computing, and Soldier as a System.
- **'Sarathi Sandesh Vahini':** Context: Uttar Pradesh has launched 'Sarathi Sandesh Vahini' mission. The 'Sarathi Sandesh Vahini' is a mission started by the state family welfare department with an aim to spread awareness regarding family planning in urban and rural areas.
- **Under this campaign,** vehicles will provide family planning information to the viewers through various documentaries and films.

Time to raise the bar

- **Summary:** The editorial discusses about the issue of post-retirement jobs taken up by the judges, concerns expressed over such jobs, how it could affect independence of the judiciary and the viable solution.
- **What's the concern?** Judges accepting a post offered by the government post their retirement. The practice of a judge looking forward to accepting employment under the government after retirement was undesirable as it could affect the independence of the judiciary.
- **If retired judges** are appointed to head tribunals constituted by government, it may result in decisions being influenced if the Government itself is a litigant and appointment authority at the same time.
- **Views of Law Commission:** Law commission has categorically denounced the proclivity of judges accepting post-retirement jobs sponsored by governments and called for an end to it.
- **What the data say?** In a study, the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy pointed out that as many as 70 out of 100 Supreme Court retired judges have taken up assignments in the National Human Rights Commission of India, National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Armed Forces Tribunal, and the Law Commission of India, etc.
- **What's the way out then?** The valuable experience and insights that competent and honest judges acquire during their period of service cannot be wasted after retirement. Unlike abroad, a judge of the higher judiciary in India retires at a comparatively young age and is capable of many more years of productive work.
- **The viable option** is to expeditiously establish, through a properly enacted statute, a commission made up of a majority, if not exclusively, of retired judges to make appointments of competent retired judges to tribunals and judicial bodies.
- **Its time to put** in place a process to regulate post-retirement appointments for judges. Such a process must sufficiently insulate the judiciary from the charge of being a recipient of government largesse.

UPSC = Fever



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India's First Semi High Speed Train, "Vande Bharat Express" to be flagged off by PM tomorrow

- **New Delhi-Varanasi train journey to be covered in just 8 hours** Train will Run on all days Except Mondays and Thursdays Speed, Scale and Service- Hallmarks of Vande Bharat Express A Make-in-India Success Story The 'Make in India' effort of Indian Railways has culminated into India's first Semi High Speed Train, "Vande Bharat Express".
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will flag off the maiden run of the train on New Delhi-Kanpur-Allahabad-Varanasi route train tomorrow morning from the New Delhi Railway Station. He will inspect the facilities in the train and address a gathering on this occasion. Union Minister of Railways and Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal will lead the team of officials and media persons aboard the train on its inaugural run tomorrow. It will stop at Kanpur and Allahabad where it will be received by dignitaries and the people.
- **Vande Bharat Express** can run up to a maximum speed of 160 kmph and has travel classes like Shatabdi Train but with better facilities. It aims to provide a totally new travel experience to passengers. The Train will cover the distance between New Delhi and Varanasi in 8 hours and will run on all days except Mondays and Thursdays.
- **All coaches are equipped** with automatic doors, GPS based audio-visual passenger information system, on-board hotspot Wi-Fi for entertainment purposes, and very comfortable seating. All toilets are bio-vacuum type. The lighting is dual mode, viz. diffused for general illumination and personal for every seat. Every coach has a pantry with facility to serve hot meals, hot and cold beverages. The insulation is meant to keep heat and noise to very low levels for additional passenger comfort.
- **Vande Bharat Express** has 16 air-conditioned coaches of which 2 are executive class coaches. The total seating capacity is 1,128 passengers. It is much more than the conventional Shatabdi rake of equal number of coaches, thanks to shifting of all electric equipment below the coaches and seats in the driving coach also.
- **Adding up the green footprints**, the train has regenerative braking system in the Vande Bharat Express coaches which can save up to 30% of electrical energy.
- **Speed, Safety and Service** are the hallmarks of this train. Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai, a Railways Production unit, has been the force behind a completely in-house design and manufacture, computer modelling and working with a large number of suppliers for system integration in just 18 months.

1st Aqua Mega Food Park in Andhra Pradesh:

- **Context:** The government has commissioned Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park at Tundurru Village in Bhimavaram Mandal, West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh.
- **This is the 1st Mega Aqua Food Park** operationalised exclusively established for fish and marine products processing in the State of Andhra Pradesh. It will provide a platform and establish backward and forward linkages covering the entire aqua food processing value chain, quality assurance, food safety and implementation of best practices in post-harvest management.
- **Mohar reservoir project:** Context: The Chhattisgarh Water Resources Department (CWRD) commenced the work on Mohar Reservoir Project in Balod district without ensuring the land required was acquired and obtaining environment and forest clearances, says the latest Comptroller and Auditor General report on Chhattisgarh.
- **Key facts:** The Mohar reservoir project is proposed across the confluence of river Dangarh and Dalekasa with a catchment of 143 square km. The gross command area of the project is 1100 hectares. The proposed project is expected to irrigate 800 hectares of Kharif paddy and supply 1000 million cubic (1 TMC) water by feeder canal to Kharkhara reservoir for 500MW power plant of NSPCL in Bhilai.

- **Crying Keelback:** Context: Researchers find new snake in Arunachal- Crying Keelback (named for the mark below its eyes, that gives the illusion that it is crying) snake or the *Hebius lacrima*. The Crying Keelback has a set of characteristics that together make it different from other species in the *Habeas* genus: the mark under its eyes, the interrupted pale head stripe, among others.

A case for Commons sense

- **Summary:** The editorial discusses about the rich inherited biodiversity, the need to protect and use sustainably, issues associated, the role of CBD and what needs to be done in near future.
- **Background- principle of 'Commons':** For thousands of years, humans have considered natural resources and the environment as a global public good, with communities having diligently managed these resources using the principle of 'Commons'. In simple terms, these are a set of resources such as air, land, water and biodiversity that do not belong to one community or individual, but to humanity. All developments we see in the establishment of civilisations across the world as well as agricultural development feeding the world today are a result of such 'Commons' being managed by communities for centuries.
- **Significance of Commons:** According to estimates, a third of the global population depends on 'Commons' for their survival; 65% of global land area is under 'Commons', in different forms.
- **At least 293,061 million** metric tonnes of carbon (MtC) are stored in the collective forestlands of indigenous peoples and local communities. This is 33 times the global energy emissions in 2017. The significance of 'Commons' in supporting pollination (the cost estimated to be worth \$224 billion annually at global levels) cannot be overlooked. In India, the extent of 'Common' land ranges between 48.69 million and 84.2 million hectares, constituting 15-25% of its total geographical area. 'Common'-pool resources contribute \$5 billion a year to the incomes of poor Indian households.
- **Around 77% of India's** livestock is kept in grazing-based or extensive systems and dependent on 'Commons' pool resources. And 53% of India's milk and 74% of its meat requirements are met from livestock kept in extensive 'Common' systems. 'Commons' are now a major provider of livelihood options for both urban and peri-urban populations. The relevance of 'Commons' impacting urban dwellers cannot be overlooked with more urbanisation happening.
- **What are the main concerns now?** With money and power to privatise these natural resources for individual prosperity in the form of property management principles, intellectual property rights and others, the benefits of these natural resources are not being shared equally.
- **In one form the CBD** — a multi-lateral environmental agreement that has provided legal certainty to countries through the principle of sovereign rights over biodiversity — also contributed to states now owning the resources, including their rights on use and management.
- **The intent of the CBD** and having sovereign rights was to manage resources better. But the results of such management have been questionable. A key reason cited is that 'Commons' and common property resource management principles and approaches are ignored and compromised.
- **India's case:** Despite their significance, 'Commons' in India have suffered continued decline and degradation. National Sample Survey Office data show a 1.9% quinquennial rate of decline in the area of 'Common' lands, though microstudies show a much more rapid decline of 31-55% over 50 years, jeopardising the health of systemic drivers such as soil, moisture, nutrient, biomass and biodiversity, in turn aggravating food, fodder and water crises. As of 2013, India's annual cost of environmental degradation has been estimated to be ₹3.75 trillion per year, i.e. 5.7% of GDP according to the World Bank.
- **Why worry about this?** 'Commons' becoming uncommon is a major socio-political, economic and environmental problem. While the state can have oversight over resource management, keeping people away from using and managing 'Commons' is against effective governance of 'Commons'. The sovereign rights provided for, legally, under the CBD should not be misunderstood by the state as a handle to do away with 'Commons'-based approaches to managing biodiversity, land, water and other resources.
- **Need of the hour:** Current discussions under the United Nations should focus on how and why 'Commons' have been negatively impacted by progressive pronouncements to save the earth and people. There needs to be a review of current governance of biodiversity and natural resources.
- **In addition** to seeking more money, time and capacities to deal with biodiversity and natural resource management, we need to focus on three specific approaches:
- **To re-introduce** more strongly, the management and governance principles of 'Commons' approaches into decision-making and implementation of conservation, use and benefit sharing action. To use Joseph Schumpeter's approach of creative destruction to put resource management in the hands of the people. To re-look at Elinor Ostrom's Nobel Prize winning principles of dealing with 'Commons'.



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Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan (PM- SYM) to be Implemented from February 15 Posted On: 14 FEB 2019 4:23PM by PIB Delhi

- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM)** will be rolled out by the Ministry of Labour and Employment tomorrow i.e. 15.02.2019. The scheme announced in the Interim Budget was notified by the Ministry recently. As many as 42 crore workers are estimated to be engaged in the unorganized sector of the country.
- **The unorganised workers** mostly engaged as home based workers, street vendors, mid-day meal workers, head loaders, brick kiln workers, cobblers, rag pickers, domestic workers, washer men, rickshaw pullers, landless labourers, own account workers, agricultural workers, construction workers, beedi workers, handloom workers, leather workers, audio- visual workers and similar other occupations whose monthly income is Rs 15,000/ per month or less and belong to the entry age group of 18-40 years are eligible for the scheme. They should not be covered under New Pension Scheme (NPS), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme or Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). Further, he/she should not be an income tax payer.
- **Following are the salient Features of PM-SYM:** Minimum Assured Pension: Each subscriber under the PM-SYM, shall receive minimum assured pension of Rs 3000/- per month after attaining the age of 60 years. Family Pension: During the receipt of pension, if the subscriber dies, the spouse of the beneficiary shall be entitled to receive 50% of the pension received by the beneficiary as family pension. Family pension is applicable only to spouse.
- **(iii) If a beneficiary** has given regular contribution and died due to any cause (before age of 60 years), his/her spouse will be entitled to join and continue the scheme subsequently by payment of regular contribution or exit the scheme as per provisions of exit and withdrawal.
- **Matching contribution** by the Central Government: PM-SYM is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme on a 50:50 basis where prescribed age-specific contribution shall be made by the beneficiary and the matching contribution by the Central Government as per the chart. For example, if a person enters the scheme at an age of 29 years, he is required to contribute Rs 100/- per month till the age of 60 years. An equal amount of Rs 100/- will be contributed by the Central Government.
- **Enrolment Process under PM-SYM:** The subscriber will be required to have a mobile phone, savings bank account and Aadhaar number. The eligible subscriber may visit the nearest CSCs and get enrolled for PM-SYM using Aadhaar number and savings bank account/ Jan-Dhan account number on self-certification basis.
- **Later, facility** will be provided where the subscriber can also visit the PM-SYM web portal or can download the mobile app and self-register using Aadhaar number/ savings bank account/ Jan-Dhan account number on self-certification basis.
- **Enrollment agencies:** The enrolment will be carried out by all the Community Service Centers (CSCs). The unorganised workers may visit their nearest CSCs along with their Aadhaar Card and Savings Bank account passbook/Jandhan account and get registered themselves for the Scheme. Contribution amount for the first month shall be paid in cash for which they will be provided with a receipt.
- **Facilitation Centres:** All the branch offices of LIC, the offices of ESIC/EPFO and all Labour offices of Central and State Governments will facilitate the unorganised workers about the Scheme, its benefits and the procedure to be followed, at their respective centers.
- **In this respect,** the arrangements to be made by all offices of LIC, ESIC, EPFO all Labour offices of Central and State Governments are given below, for ease of reference:
- **All LIC, EPFO/ESIC** and all Labour offices of Central and State Governments may set up a "Facilitation Desk" to facilitate the unorganised workers, guide about the features of the Scheme and direct them to nearest CSC. Each desk may consist of at least one staff. They will have backdrop, stand at the main gate and sufficient number of brochures printed in Hindi and regional languages to be provided to the unorganised workers.
- **Unorganised workers** will visit these centres with Aadhaar Card, Savings bank account/ Jandhan account and mobile phone. Help desk will have onsite suitable sitting and other necessary facilities for these workers. Any other measures intended to facilitate the unorganised workers about the Scheme, in their respective centers. Fund Management: PM-SYM will be a Central Sector Scheme administered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and implemented through Life Insurance Corporation of India and CSCs. LIC will be the Pension Fund Manager and responsible for Pension pay out. The amount collected under PM-SYM pension scheme shall be invested as per the investment pattern specified by Government of India.

- **Exit and Withdrawal:** Considering the hardships and erratic nature of employability of these workers, the exit provisions of scheme have been kept flexible. Exit provisions are as under: In case subscriber exits the scheme within a period of less than 10 years, the beneficiary's share of contribution only will be returned to him with savings bank interest rate. If subscriber exits after a period of 10 years or more but before superannuation age i.e. 60 years of age, the beneficiary's share of contribution along with accumulated interest as actually earned by fund or at the savings bank interest rate whichever is higher.
- **If a beneficiary** has given regular contributions and died due to any cause, his/ her spouse will be entitled to continue the scheme subsequently by payment of regular contribution or exit by receiving the beneficiary's contribution along with accumulated interest as actually earned by fund or at the savings bank interest rate whichever is higher.
- **If a beneficiary** has given regular contributions and become permanently disabled due to any cause before the superannuation age, i.e. 60 years, and unable to continue to contribute under the scheme, his/ her spouse will be entitled to continue the scheme subsequently by payment of regular contribution or exit the scheme by receiving the beneficiary's contribution with interest as actually earned by fund or at the savings bank interest rate whichever is higher.
- **After the death of subscriber** as well as his/her spouse, the entire corpus will be credited back to the fund. Any other exit provision, as may be decided by the Government on advice of NSSB. Default of Contributions: If a subscriber has not paid the contribution continuously he/she will be allowed to regularize his contribution by paying entire outstanding dues, along with penalty charges, if any, decided by the Government.
- **Pension Pay out:** Once the beneficiary joins the scheme at the entry age of 18-40 years, the beneficiary has to contribute till 60 years of age. On attaining the age of 60 years, the subscriber will get the assured monthly pension of Rs.3000/- with benefit of family pension, as the case may be.

Registration of Marriage of NRI Bill, 2019

- **Objective of the bill:** To offer more protection against the exploitation of Indian citizens, mostly Indian women by their NRI partners.
- **Key provisions:** Amendment of the legal framework to act as a deterrent to the erring NRI spouses and creating more accountability and offer protection against exploitation of Indian Citizens, especially women married to NRIs.
- **Registration:** Under the new bill, a marriage between an NRI and an Indian citizen will have to be registered in India or Indian missions and posts abroad within 30 days from the date of marriage. If the marriage isn't registered within 30 days, the passport of the NRI will be revoked, summons and warrant be issued.
- **Section 86A:** After the bill's passing, the necessary changes would be carried out in the Passports Act, 1967 and Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 by insertion of Section 86A. The bill would amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, solving a major problem of serving judicial summons for court proceedings in India.
- **Significance and impact of the legislation:** The Bill would offer great protection to Indian citizens married to NRIs and serve as a deterrent to NRIs against harassment of their spouses.
- **Need for a legislation on this:** The bill has been introduced with the hope of restricting NRI husbands from using marriage as a tool of exploitation and making money and providing better enforcement of rights for the deserted woman under the family laws. The introduction of the Bill was necessitated due to numerous complaints received from Indian nationals mostly women, who were deserted or harassed by their Non-Resident Indian Spouses. Since marriage takes place outside India, there are no records or legal documents for further procedures to be initiated against the offender.

Actions undertaken to tackle climate change

- **The publication mentions** the key initiatives undertaken by India under various sectors towards combating and adapting to climate change.
- **Major initiatives of the Government towards combating climate change:** National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC): The Action plan covers eight major missions on Solar, Enhanced Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Habitat, Water, Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, Green India, Sustainable Agriculture and Strategic Knowledge on Climate Change.
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** ISA was jointly launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the then President of France, Francois Hollande in Paris on the side-lines of CoP 21 in 2015. The vision and mission of the alliance is to provide a dedicated platform for cooperation among solar resource rich countries that lie completely or partial between the Tropics of Capricorn & Cancer.

- **State Action Plan** on Climate Change (SAPCC): State governments have drafted climate strategies aligned with the eight National Missions under the NAPCC. The strategies focus on issues ranging from climate mitigation, energy efficiency, and resource conservation to climate adaptation. FAME Scheme for E-mobility: Union Government in April 2015 launched Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric vehicles (FAME) – India Scheme with an aim to boost sales of eco-friendly vehicles in the country. It is a part of the National Mission for Electric Mobility.
- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation & Urban Transformation (AMRUT) for Smart Cities.** Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana: The scheme provides LPG connections to five crore below-poverty-line beneficiaries. The connections are given in the name of women beneficiaries to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels and conventional fuel like cow dung for cooking food, thus reducing air pollution.
- **UJALA scheme:** The scheme was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2015 with a target of replacing 77 crore incandescent lamps with LED bulbs. The usage of LED bulbs will not only result in reducing electricity bills but also help in environment protection.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission:** Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Movement) is a campaign that was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 2, 2014. The campaign seeks to clean the streets, roads and infrastructure of the country's 4041 statutory cities and towns.

Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill 2019

- **Objectives of the bill:** To uphold the rights of people with leprosy as the disease is curable. To amend five personal laws- the Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939, Divorce Act (for Christians) 1869, Special Marriage Act 1954 and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act 1956- to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce.
- **Various efforts in this regard:** The first attempt towards eliminating the bias against people suffering from the disease was made in 2008 when the National Human Rights Commission had underlined the need to make amendments in certain personal laws and other legislations.
- **In 2010,** the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Resolution on the 'Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members', which was signed and ratified by India. Subsequently, the 20th Law Commission of India in its 256th Report titled "Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons Affected by Leprosy" had recommended repeal of laws and provisions that were discriminatory against leprosy-affected people.
- **In 2014,** the Supreme Court had also asked the Centre and the state governments to take the necessary steps for rehabilitation and integration of leprosy-affected people into the mainstream including the steps to repeal the provisions where leprosy has been treated as a stigmatic disability.
- **Need for a legislation in this regard:** Over 110 Central and State laws discriminate against leprosy patients. These laws stigmatise and isolate leprosy patients and, coupled with age-old beliefs about leprosy, cause the patients untold suffering. The biased provisions in these statutes were introduced prior to medical advancements. Now, modern medicine specifically, multi-drug therapy (MDT) completely cures the disease.
- **Leprosy:** Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by Mycobacterium leprae. It usually affects the skin and peripheral nerves, but has a wide range of clinical manifestations.
- **The disease** is characterized by long incubation period generally 5-7 years and is classified as paucibacillary or multibacillary, depending on the bacillary load. Leprosy is a leading cause of permanent physical disability.
- **Timely diagnosis** and treatment of cases, before nerve damage has occurred, is the most effective way of preventing disability due to leprosy.

Credit linked capital subsidy scheme

- **The Cabinet Committee** on Economic Affairs has approved the continuation of the scheme with a total outlay of Rs 2,900 crore.
- **Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme:** The objective of the Scheme is to facilitate technology up-gradation in MSMEs by providing an upfront capital subsidy of 15 per cent (on institutional finance of up to Rs 1 crore availed by them) for induction of well-established and improved technology in the specified 51 sub-sectors/products approved.
- **The major objective** is to upgrade their plant & machinery with state-of-the-art technology, with or without expansion and also for new MSEs which have set up their facilities with appropriate eligible and proven technology duly approved under scheme guidelines. The Scheme is a demand driven one without any upper limit on overall annual spending on the subsidy disbursal.

- **Nature of assistance:** The revised scheme aims at facilitating technology up-gradation by providing 15% up front capital subsidy to MSMEs, including tiny, khadi, village and coir industrial units, on institutional finance availed by them for induction of well-established and improved technologies in specified sub-sectors/products approved under the scheme.

National Commission for Safai Karmacharis

- **Background:** The NCSK was established in the year 1993 as per the provisions of the NCSK Act 1993 initially for the period upto 1997. Later the validity of the Act was initially extended upto 2002 and thereafter upto 2004. The NCSK Act ceased to have effect from 2004. After that the tenure of the NCSK has been extended as a non-statutory body from time to time. The tenure of the present Commission is upto 31.3.2019.
- **Role of NCSK:** Recommend to the Government regarding specific programmes for welfare of Safai Karmacharis, study and evaluate the existing welfare programmes for SafaiKarmacharis, investigate cases of specific grievances etc. Also as per the provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, the NCSK has been assigned the work to monitor the implementation of the Act, tender advice for its effective implementation to the Centre and State Governments and enquire into complaints regarding contravention/non-implementation of the provisions of the Act.
- **Major impact:** The major beneficiaries of the proposal would be the Safai Karmacharis and persons engaged in manual scavenging in the country since the NCSK will work for their welfare and upliftment.
- **Though the Government** has taken many steps for the upliftment of the SafaiKarmacharis, the deprivation suffered by them in socio-economic and educational terms is still far from being eliminated. Further the practice of manual scavenging is still prevalent in the country and its eradication continues to be an area of the highest priority for the Government.

e-AUSHADHI portal

- **Context:** Ministry of State (IC) for AYUSH, launched the e-AUSHADHI portal, for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters.
- **Key facts:** e-AUSHADHI portal is intended for increased transparency, improved information management facility, improved data usability and increased accountability. Timelines will be fixed for processing of application through this portal with SMS and e-mail status updates at each step of the process.
- **It will provide** real-time information of the licensed manufactures and their products, cancelled and spurious drugs, contact details of the concerned authority for specific grievances.

Citizenship, Triple Talaq Bills Lapse in Rajya Sabha as House Adjourns Sine Die

- **The Budget session** was the last Parliament session of the present government. The 17th Lok Sabha has to be constituted before June 3.
- **When Does a Bill Lapse in Indian Parliament?** Articles 107 and 108 of the Indian Constitution deal with these provisions. When the Lok Sabha is dissolved, all business including bills, motions, resolutions, notices, petitions and so on pending before it or its committees lapse. They must be reintroduced in the newly-constituted Lok Sabha to be pursued further.
- **Cases when a bill lapse:** A bill originated in the Lok Sabha but pending in the Lok Sabha – lapses. A bill originated and passed by the Rajya Sabha but pending in Lok Sabha – lapses. A bill originated and passed by the Lok Sabha but pending in the Rajya Sabha – lapses.
- **A bill** originated in the Rajya Sabha and returned to that House by the Lok Sabha with amendments and still pending in the Rajya Sabha on the date of the dissolution of Lok Sabha- lapses.

- **Cases when a bill does not lapse:** A bill pending in the Rajya Sabha but not passed by the Lok Sabha does not lapse. If the president has notified the holding of a joint sitting before the dissolution of Lok Sabha, does not lapse. A bill passed by both Houses but pending assent of the president does not lapse. A bill passed by both Houses but returned by the president for reconsideration of Rajya Sabha does not lapse. Some pending bills and all pending assurances that are to be examined by the Committee on Government Assurances do not lapse on the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
- **Key facts:** Adjournment (of a sitting) does not affect the bills or any other business pending before the House and the same can be resumed when the House meets again. Prorogation (of a session) does not affect the bills or any other business pending before the House. However, all pending notices (other than those for introducing bills) lapse on prorogation and fresh notices have to be given for the next session.

National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)

- **About National Board for Wildlife:** It is a "Statutory Organization" constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Its role is "advisory" in nature and advises the Central Government on framing policies and measures for conservation of wildlife in the country. Primary function of the Board is to promote the conservation and development of wildlife and forests.
- **It has power** to review all wildlife-related matters and approve projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries. No alteration of boundaries in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries can be done without approval of the NBWL.
- **Composition:** The NBWL is chaired by the Prime Minister. It has 47 members including the Prime Minister. Among these, 19 members are ex-officio members. Other members include three Members of Parliament (two from Lok Sabha and one from Rajya Sabha), five NGOs and 10 eminent ecologists, conservationists and environmentalists.

Trans fatty acids (TFA)

- **Various studies** suggest that an unhealthy diet with a high TFA content is a significant factor that pushes up metabolic syndrome and the burden of its associated complications. The Health Department is being supported in this initiative by Vital Strategies, the nutrition wing of the World Bank; the WHO; the FSSAI; and the State Food Safety wing, which will be in charge of enforcement.
- **What are Trans fats?** Trans fatty acids (TFAs) or Trans fats are the most harmful type of fats which can have much more adverse effects on our body than any other dietary constituent. These fats are largely produced artificially but a small amount also occurs naturally. Thus in our diet, these may be present as Artificial TFAs and/ or Natural TFAs.
- **Artificial TFAs** are formed when hydrogen is made to react with the oil to produce fats resembling pure ghee/butter. In our diet the major sources of artificial TFAs are the partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVO)/vanaspati/ margarine while the natural TFAs are present in meats and dairy products, though in small amounts.
- **Harmful effects:** TFAs pose a higher risk of heart disease than saturated fats. While saturated fats raise total cholesterol levels, TFAs not only raise total cholesterol levels but also reduce the good cholesterol (HDL), which helps to protect us against heart disease. Trans fats consumption increases the risk of developing heart disease and stroke.
- **It is also** associated with a higher risk of developing obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, infertility, certain types of cancers and can also lead to compromised fetal development causing harm to the yet to be born baby.
- **Why they are increasingly being used?** TFA containing oils can be preserved longer, they give the food the desired shape and texture and can easily substitute 'Pure ghee'. These are comparatively far lower in cost and thus add to profit/saving.
- **Permissible limit:** WHO recommends that trans-fat intake be limited to less than 1% of total energy intake and has called for the total elimination of TFAs in global food supply by 2023. FSSAI has proposed to limit TFA limit in foods to 2% and eliminate trans fats from foods by 2022.

Ghumot to be declared Goa's heritage musical instrument:

- **Context:** Ghumot, an indigenous earthen drum will soon be notified as a heritage instrument of Goa. Ghumot is an indigenous earthen drum fashioned as a designed clay pot, with the skin of the monitor lizard stretched taut across the pot's mouth, forming a drumhead. It is a percussion instrument widely played during Ganesh Chaturthi Aarties.
- **The instrument** was banned due to the use of the skin of the endangered monitor lizard for the drum membrane. In recent years, ghumot makers have started using goat skin instead. The ban is applicable to the use of any animal listed in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and that the goat is not one of them. Monitor lizard is listed under this.
- **'Exercise Topchi':** What is it? It is an annual exercise held by Indian Army to showcase its artillery firepower, aviation and surveillance capabilities. The latest edition was held at Deolali Camp near Nashik.
- **Cobra Gold Military Exercise:** Context: The United States and Thailand are hosting the multi-nation Cobra military exercise this year. The exercise is taking place in the northern Thai province of Phitsanulok. This is the 38th edition of this exercise.
- **About the exercise:** This is a Thai-American initiative with an aim to improve coordination between the armed forces. It is one of the Asia-Pacific region's largest multinational military exercises that is held in Thailand every year. It was first held in 1982 and its headquarters is in Bangkok, Thailand.
- **India joined** this exercise for the first time in 2016 while China was admitted for the first time in 2015 but was only allowed to participate in humanitarian assistance training.

Every drop matters

- **What's the issue now?** A ready supply of safe blood in sufficient quantities is a vital component of modern health care. However, in 2015-16, India was 1.1 million units short of its blood requirements. There were considerable regional disparities, with 81 districts in the country not having a blood bank at all. Yet, in April 2017, it was reported that blood banks in India had in the last five years discarded a total of 2.8 million units of expired, unused blood (more than 6 lakh litres).
- **Concerns over safety and quality of the blood being received:** Blood is received through professional donation (who accept remuneration) and replacement donation (which is not voluntary). Blood is also donated voluntarily and without remuneration and it is considered to be the safest. To prevent transfusion-transmitted infections (TTIs), collected blood needs to be safe as well. Due to practical constraints, tests are only conducted post-collection. Thus blood donor selection relies on donors filling in health questionnaires truthfully.
- **In the case** of professional donors there is a higher chance of there being TTIs in their blood, as these donors may not provide full disclosure. In the case of replacement donation, there could be a higher chance of TTIs because replacement donors, being under pressure, may be less truthful about diseases.
- **Even the conducted** test may not be fool-proof. These tests may not be fool proof as there is a window period after a person first becomes infected with a virus during which the infection may not be detectable. This makes it crucial to minimise the risk in the first instance of collection. Collecting healthy blood will also result in less blood being discarded later.
- **How is it regulated?** Blood is considered to be a 'drug' under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940. Therefore, just like any other manufacturer or storer of drugs, blood banks need to be licensed by the Drug Controller-General of India (DCGI). For this, they need to meet a series of requirements with respect to the collection, storage, processing and distribution of blood, as specified under the Drugs & Cosmetics Rules, 1945.
- **Blood banks** are inspected by drug inspectors who are expected to check not only the premises and equipment but also various quality and medical aspects such as processing and testing facilities. Their findings lead to the issuance, suspension or cancellation of a licence.
- **Governance issues:** The regulatory framework which governs the blood transfusion infrastructure in India is scattered across different laws, policies, guidelines and authorities. In 1996, the Supreme Court directed the government to establish the National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC) and State Blood Transfusion Councils (SBTCs). The NBTC functions as the apex policy-formulating and expert body for blood transfusion services and includes representation from blood banks. However, it lacks statutory backing (unlike the DCGI), and as such, the standards and requirements recommended by it are only in the form of guidelines.
- **This gives rise** to a peculiar situation — the expert blood transfusion body can only issue non-binding guidelines, whereas the general pharmaceutical regulator has the power to license blood banks. This regulatory dissonance exacerbates the serious issues on the ground and results in poor coordination and monitoring.
- **Need of the hour:** The present scenario under the DCGI is far from desirable, especially given how regulating blood involves distinct considerations when compared to most commercial drugs. In order to ensure the involvement of technical experts who can complement the DCGI, the rules should be amended to involve the NBTC and SBTCs in the licensing process.

- **Given the wide range** of responsibilities the DCGI has to handle, its licensing role with respect to blood banks can even be delegated to the NBTC under the rules. This would go a long way towards ensuring that the regulatory scheme is up to date and accommodates medical and technological advances. A collaborative regulator can, more effectively, take the lead in facilitating coordination, planning and management. This may reduce the regional disparities in blood supply as well as ensure that the quality of blood does not vary between private, corporate, international, hospital-based, non-governmental organisations and government blood banks.
- **Conclusion:** The aim of the National Blood Policy formulated by the government back in 2002 was to "ensure easily accessible and adequate supply of safe and quality blood". To achieve this goal, India should look to reforming its regulatory approach at the earliest.

Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)

- **Background:** Objectives: Dam Safety Conferences are being organized as an annual event in different DRIP States in collaboration with the Implementing Agencies and leading academic institutes to provide a common platform for all stakeholders including non-DRIP States.
- **Dam professionals**, academicians, scientists, as well as industries both from within the country and from around the world gather to deliberate on all aspects related to dam safety and the solutions that worked best in addressing dam safety concerns.
- **Why ensure safety of dams in the country?** About 80% of our large dams are over twenty-five years old. About 209 dams are over 100 years old and were built in an era when design practices and safety considerations were much below the current design and safety norms. Several of these dams may be experiencing distress and are in need of attention for ensuring their structural safety and operational efficiency.
- **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.
- **Background:** Globally India ranks third after China and the USA in terms of the number of large dams with 5264 large dams in operation and 437 large dams under construction. The total storage capacity of the impounded water by these dams is about 283 billion cubic meters (BCM).

Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahaabhiyan or KUSUM scheme

- **About KUSUM scheme:** What is it? It is a ₹1.4 lakh-crore scheme for promoting decentralised solar power production of up to 28,250 MW to help farmers. Benefits: It would provide extra income to farmers, by giving them an option to sell additional power to the grid through solar power projects set up on their barren lands. It would help in de-dieselling the sector as also the DISCOMS.
- **Components** of the scheme: The components of the scheme include building 10,000 MW solar plants on barren lands and providing sops to DISCOMS to purchase the electricity produced, 'solarising' existing pumps of 7250 MW as well as government tube wells with a capacity of 8250 MW and distributing 17.5 lakh solar pumps. The 60% subsidy on the solar pumps provided to farmers will be shared between the Centre and the States while 30% would be provided through bank loans. The balance cost has to be borne by the farmers.
- **Significance** of the scheme: Expected positive outcomes of the scheme include promotion of decentralised solar power production, reduction of transmission losses as well as providing support to the financial health of DISCOMS by reducing the subsidy burden to the agriculture sector. The scheme would also promote energy efficiency and water conservation and provide water security to farmers.
- **The proposed scheme provides for:** Setting up of grid-connected renewable power plants each of 500KW to 2 MW in the rural area. Installation of standalone off-grid solar water pumps to fulfil irrigation needs of farmers not connected to grid.
- **Solarization** of existing grid-connected agriculture pumps to make farmers independent of grid supply and also sell surplus solar power generated to Discom and get extra income.

Bill to amend Cinematograph Act

- **Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2019:** The Bill seeks to amend provisions of Cinematograph Act, 1952, in order to tackle film piracy by including penal provisions for unauthorized camcording and duplication of films. It aims to check piracy, particularly the release of pirated versions of films on the internet that causes huge losses to the film industry and the exchequer.
- **The bill proposes** to make film piracy offences punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and fines that may extend to ₹10 lakh or both. The proposed amendment states that any person, who without the written authorisation of the copyright owner, uses any recording device to make or transmit a copy of a film, or attempts to do so, or abet the making or transmission of such a copy, will be liable for such a punishment.
- **Significance and Expected Outcomes:** The film industry has been demanding for a long time that the government consider amendments to the law preventing camcording and piracy. The proposed amendments would increase industry revenues, boost job creation, fulfil important objectives of India's National Intellectual Property policy. It will give relief against piracy and infringing content online.

Swachh Shakti 2019

- **Swachh Shakti Programme:** The Swachh Shakti Programme is a national event which aims to bring in to focus the leadership role played by rural women in Swachh Bharat Mission. Launched in 2017, the Programme is a part of ongoing activities under the aegis of the Swachh Bharat Mission, launched on October 2, 2014 by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to achieve a clean and Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by October 2, 2019.
- **The programme** is attended by women panchs and sarpanchs from across the country. The first edition of Swachh Shakti programme was launched from Gandhinagar, Gujarat by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on International Women's Day 2017. The second edition was launched from Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

World Government Summit

- **About World Government Summit:** The World Government Summit is a global platform dedicated to shaping the future of government worldwide. Each year, the Summit sets the agenda for the next generation of governments with a focus on how they can harness innovation and technology to solve universal challenges facing humanity.
- **It is basically** a knowledge exchange center at the intersection between government, futurism, technology, and innovation. It functions as a thought leadership platform and networking hub for policymakers, experts, and pioneers in human development.
- **The Summit** is a gateway to the future as it functions as a stage for analysis of the future trends, issues, and opportunities facing humanity. It is also an arena to showcase innovations, best practice, and smart solutions to inspire creativity to tackle these future challenges.

Minority Status of Aligarh Muslim University

- **The matter** has been referred to the larger bench to determine the correctness of minority status of AMU and to define the parameters for granting minority status to the institution.

- **What's the issue?** In 1981, an amendment was brought in to accord the university minority status, which was held as unconstitutional by the Allahabad High Court. The Attorney General had told the Supreme Court that the Aligarh Muslim University could not be categorised as a minority institution.
- **After the Allahabad High Court** recognised the university as a non-minority institution in 2006, the Congress-led UPA government had filed a plea challenging the verdict. The NDA government in 2016 told the Supreme Court that it was withdrawing the appeal filed by the previous government saying that the university was set up by a Central Act, a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court had held it as a "central university" and not a minority institution.
- **What is the 'minority character' of an educational institution?** Article 30(1) of the Constitution gives all religious and linguistic minorities the right to set up and run educational institutions, including schools, colleges and universities. The law guarantees that governments will not discriminate in giving aid on the basis of their being 'minority' institutions, thus sealing in a commitment by the Government of India to allow minorities to flourish.
- **Why this provision was included in the constitution?** This was done to assure minorities of being able to maintain and propagate their unique and special educational aspects.
- **Background:** AMU was founded as the Madrasatul Uloom in 1875 in Aligarh, and evolved into the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College. The seeds of Jamia Millia Islamia were sown in Aligarh by a group of nationalist students and members who formed a camp there as Jamia Millia Islamia, which later moved to Delhi. Leaders like M A Ansari, Zakir Husain and Mahatma Gandhi encouraged the university to push nationalist values and ideas.
- **However,** there was friction between JMI and AMU along political lines, as a significant section at AMU was said to be tilting towards the Muslim League, while the 'nationalist' JMI was wholeheartedly supported by the Congress.
- **Way ahead:** Protection of minorities is the hallmark of a civilization. These guarantees are essential in a democratic and pluralistic country like India. The framers of the constitution showed utmost sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of the minorities. Accordingly, special safeguards were guaranteed to the minorities and were incorporated in the chapter on fundamental rights with a view to inculcate in them a sense of confidence and security.
- **Special rights enjoyed by religious minority institutions are:** Under Art 30(1)(a), such institutions enjoy right to education as a Fundamental Right. In case the property is taken over by state, due compensation to be provided to establish institutions elsewhere. Under Article 15(5), they are not considered for reservation. Under Right to Education Act, they are not required to provide admission to children in the age group of 6-14 years upto 25% of enrolment reserved for economically backward section of society.
- **In St Stephens vs Delhi University case, 1992,** SC ruled that these institutions can have 50% seats reserved for minorities. In TMA Pai & others vs State of Karnataka & others 2002 case, SC ruled that they can have separate admission process which is fair, transparent and merit based. They can also separate fee structure but should not charge capitation fee.

Formalin in Fish

- **About Formalin:** Formalin is a toxic, colourless solution that is derived by dissolving formaldehyde gas in water. It is a cancer-inducing chemical used to preserve fish and is used as a disinfectant. It is used in the manufacture of pesticides, fertilisers, glue, paper and paint, among other products.
- **Formalin** causes irritation in the eyes, throat, skin and stomach. In the long run continued exposure causes harm to the kidneys, liver and can even cause cancers.
- **Formaldehyde** is a highly reactive, flammable gas, which means it can become a fire hazard when exposed to flame or heat.
- **Why is fish laced with formalin?** Fish is a highly perishable commodity. If it isn't maintained at the proper temperature of 5 degree Celsius, it gets spoilt. To avoid that and increase its shelf life, the sellers now use chemicals such as formalin and ammonia. If the point of sale is far from the place of catch, formalin is used as a preservative. Meanwhile, ammonia is mixed with the water that is frozen to keep fish fresh.
- **Related facts- Operation Sagar Rani:** In June 2018, Kerala food safety department officials seized nearly 9,600 kg of fish preserved in formalin at a border check post in Kollam district. The seized fish included 7,000 kg of prawns and 2,600 kg of other species. The seizure was part of 'Operation Sagar Rani' launched by the state.

Minimum support for minor forest produce

- **Background:** The MSP for MFP scheme was started by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2013 to ensure fair and remunerative prices to MFP gatherers.
- **Significance of MFP:** Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a major source of livelihood for tribals living in forest areas. The importance of MFPs for this section of the society can be gauged from the fact that around 100 million forest dwellers depend on MFPs for food, shelter, medicines and cash income. It provides them critical subsistence during the lean seasons, particularly for primitive tribal groups such as hunter gatherers, and the landless. Tribals derive 20-40% of their annual income from MFP on which they spend major portion of their time.
- **This activity** has strong linkage to women's financial empowerment as most of the MFPs are collected and used/sold by women. MFP sector has the potential to create about 10 million workdays annually in the country.
- **Need of the hour:** While it has been more than five years since the scheme was launched, it has not been implemented properly. Improving the implementation of the scheme is the need of the hour to benefit the forest-dwelling and forest-dependent communities. Moreover, despite the MFP rights being given to tribal communities under the Forest Rights Act, many states have nationalised MFPs like tendu, monopolising their trade, which is against the law.
- **Related facts for Prelims- About Van Dhan Vikas Kendras initiative:** The initiative aims to promote MFPs-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans. It mainstreams the tribal community by promoting primary level value addition to MFP at grassroots level. Through this initiative, the share of tribals in the value chain of Non-Timber Forest Produce is expected to rise from the present 20% to around 60%.



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President's Address 2014-2018: A Status Report

- **The budget** session of Parliament every year starts with the President's Address to both Houses. In this speech, the President highlights the government's achievements and legislative activities in the last year, and announces its agenda for the upcoming year. The address is followed by a motion of thanks that is moved in each House by ruling party MPs. This is followed by a discussion on the address and concludes with the Prime Minister replying to the points raised during the discussion.
- **Today, the Budget** Session 2019 commenced with the President, Mr. Ram Nath Kovind addressing a joint sitting of Parliament. In his speech, he highlighted some of the objectives that the government has realised in the past year. The President also highlighted the progress made by the government under various development schemes such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.
- **Given that today's** address comes at the end of this government's term, we examine the status of some key policy initiatives announced by the current government, that have been highlighted in speeches made in the past five years. Policy priority stated in President's Addresses 2014-2018
- **Economy and Finance** Despite a global economic downturn, the Indian economy has remained on a high growth trajectory. Growth Rate: The GDP is estimated to grow at 7.2% in 2018-19. In the last five years, GDP growth rate stayed within 7% and 8% per year, with a dip to 6.7% in 2017-18, the year of demonetisation.
- **Inflation: A target** of 4% for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation was notified by the Ministry of Finance for the period 2016-2021. CPI stayed within this band for most of the period between 2014 and 2018. Foreign Exchange Reserves stood at USD 397 billion on January 2019, as compared to USD 313 billion in May, 2014. Measures to deal with corruption, black money and counterfeit currency will be introduced
- **Demonetisation:** On November 8, 2016, the Government announced the demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes. During the period from November 2016 to October 2017, undisclosed income of over Rs 24,800 crore was detected. The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 was passed in July, 2018. The Bill seeks to confiscate properties of economic offenders who have left the country to avoid facing criminal prosecution.
- **The Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013** amends the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Under the 1988 Act, taking of a bribe by a public official was an offence. The Bill also makes the giving of a bribe an offence. To promote the concept of cooperative federalism through One Nation-One Tax and One Nation-One Market, the government introduced the Goods and Services Tax Goods and Services Tax was introduced across the country from July 1, 2017. [xi]
- **Agriculture** Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for a majority of people. For holistic development of the agricultural sector, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana was launched in 2016 Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY): PMFBY was launched with the aim of providing insurance coverage and financial support to farmers in the event of crop failure. The number of farmers enrolled under the scheme declined from 5.7 crore in 2016-17 to 5.2 crore in 2017-18.
- **Employment and Entrepreneurship** The government has continuously worked for reforms of labour laws. Minimum wages have increased by more than 40%
- **Over the last three years**, the Ministry of Labour and Employment has introduced three draft Codes to simplify labour laws. These are: (i) the draft Labour Code on Industrial Relations, (ii) the draft Code on Social Security and (iii) the draft Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions.60 Additionally, in 2017, the Code on Wages Bill, 2017 was introduced in the Lok Sabha. In 2017, the central government increased minimum wages by 40% through a gazette notification. Minimum wages (per day) for non-agricultural workers increased from Rs 250 to Rs 350 for unskilled workers and Rs 523 for skilled workers.
- **Infrastructure** Cities are the engines of economic growth. The Smart City programme was initiated to build modern amenities and infrastructure. Smart Cities and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) have an outlay of Rs 48,000 crore and Rs 50,000 crore for the period 2015-2020, respectively. As of January 19, 2018, 100 smart cities have been selected. As of 2018, the total proposed investment in these cities is Rs 2,05,018 crore.
- **All rural habitations** will be connected with all-weather roads. So far, 73,000 kilometres of roads have been laid in rural areas. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) aims to connect all eligible unconnected habitations in rural areas with all-weather roads by March 2019.[xix],[xx] As of January 29, 2019, of the target of 1.52 lakh habitations to be covered since the inception of the scheme, 1.46 lakh (96%) habitations have been connected.

- **Housing is a fundamental right.** All households shall have a dwelling unit under the Mission Housing for All by 2022. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) was launched in 2015. The Yojana has two components: rural and urban. Under PMAY-Urban, 5,33,000 have been completed in 2018-19. Under PMAY-Rural, 14,21,850 have been built in 2018-19.
- **Health and Sanitation** Poor sanitation weakens the economic wherewithal of a poor household. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan aims to ensure health and sanitation. Swachh Bharat Mission: Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) was launched on October 2, 2014 to achieve a clean and open defecation free India. It has two components: SBM Urban and SBM Rural.
- **Under SBM Urban**, as of January 29, 2019, 24,130 individual household toilets have been constructed. Under SBM Gramin, as of January 30, 2019, 919 lakh individual household toilets have been constructed (98.81% of target).
- **The government** is committed to providing affordable and accessible healthcare to all its citizens, particularly the vulnerable groups. Ayushman Bharat: In the General Budget 2018-19, the Government announced two major initiatives in health sector as a part of the Ayushman Bharat program. These were: Health and Wellness Centres and the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).
- **Ayushman Bharat** aims to create 1,50,000 health and wellness centres providing comprehensive primary healthcare. Rs 1200 crore has been allocated for this purpose. [xxx] PMJAY will cover over ten crore poor and vulnerable families. [xxxi] It will provide coverage of up to five lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. For the year 2018-19, Rs 3,125 crore has been allocated for this s

National Minimum Wage

- **Background:** There have been several developments since the norms for the fixation of the minimum wages were recommended by the 15th ILC in 1957 and subsequently strengthened by the judgement of the Supreme Court in the judgement of Workmen v Reptakos Brett & Co. case in 1992.
- **The Ministry of Labour** and Employment had constituted an expert committee in January 2017, under the Chairmanship Dr. Anoop Satpathy to review and recommend methodology for fixation of National Minimum Wage (NMW).
- **Criteria on which the minimum wage has been proposed:** Using the nutritional requirement norms as recommended by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for Indian population, the report has recommended a balanced diet approach which is culturally palatable for fixation of national minimum wage. Accordingly, it has proposed that food items amounting to the level of ± 10 per cent of 2,400 calories, along with proteins ≥ 50 gm and fats ≥ 30 gm per day per person to constitute a national level balanced food basket.
- **It also proposes** minimum wage should include reasonable expenditure on 'essential non-food items', such as clothing, fuel and light, house rent, education, medical expenses, footwear and transport, which must be equal to the median class and expenditure on any 'other non-food items' be equivalent to the sixth fractile (25-30 per cent) of the household expenditure distribution as per the NSSO-CES 2011/12 survey data.
- **What's the proposed National Minimum wage?** On the basis of the aforesaid approach, the report has recommended to fix the need based national minimum wage for India at INR 375 per day (or INR 9,750 per month) as of July 2018, irrespective of sectors, skills, occupations and rural-urban locations for a family comprising of 3.6 consumption unit.
- **It has also recommended** to introduce an additional house rent allowance (city compensatory allowance), averaging up to INR 55 per day i.e., INR 1,430 per month for urban workers over and above the NMW.
- **Regional variations:** Apart from proposing the level of a single national minimum wage at an all-India level, the report has also estimated and recommended different national minimum wages for different geographical regions of the country to suit the local realities and as per socio-economic and labour market contexts.
- **For the purpose** of estimating national minimum wages at regional levels it has grouped the states into five regions based on a composite index and have recommended region specific national minimum wages as follows:
- **Way ahead:** The committee has also recommended reviewing the consumption basket every five years, subject to the availability of NSSO-CES data, and – within the period of 5 years – revising and updating the basic minimum wage at least in line with the consumer price index (CPI) every six months, to reflect changes in the cost of living.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban

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

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana

- **About Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana:** PM-SYM is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme that will engage as many as 42 crore workers in the unorganised sector.
- **Eligibility:** The unorganised sector workers, with income of less than Rs 15,000 per month and who belong to the entry age group of 18-40 years, will be eligible for the scheme.
- **Those workers** should not be covered under New Pension Scheme (NPS), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme or Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). He or she should not be an income tax payer.
- **Benefits:** Minimum Assured Pension: Each subscriber under the scheme will receive minimum assured pension of Rs 3000 per month after attaining the age of 60 years. In case of death during receipt of pension: If the subscriber dies during the receipt of pension, his or her spouse will be entitled to receive 50 percent of the pension as family pension. This family pension is applicable only to spouse.
- **In case of death** before the age of 60 years: If a beneficiary has given regular contribution and dies before attaining the age of 60 years, his or her spouse will be entitled to continue the scheme subsequently by payment of regular contribution or may even exit the scheme.
- **Contribution to the scheme:** Contribution by the Subscriber: The subscriber is required to contribute the prescribed contribution amount from the age of joining the scheme till the age of 60 years.
- **Medium of contribution:** The subscriber can contribute to the PM-SYM through 'auto-debit' facility from his or her savings bank account or from his or her Jan- Dhan account.
- **Equal contribution** by the Central Government: Under the PM-SYM, the prescribed age-specific contribution by the beneficiary and the matching contribution by the Central Government will be made on a '50:50 basis'.

Dolphin census

- **The census** covered important aquatic ecosystems in the state including the Chilika lake, India's largest brackish water lagoon, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts, the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and its nearby areas within the Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district, Balasore district and the mouth of the Rushukulya River in Ganjam district.
- **Important findings:** Population declined from 469 in 2018 to 259 this year. The reduction in the number of dolphins compared to last year could be due to the migration of species from the Chilika Lake and other water bodies to the deep sea. Gahirmatha is the home of the state's largest dolphin population, having 126 animals. More dolphins were found in Gahirmatha than Chilika due to its bigger areas.
- **After Gahirmatha**, Chilika had the next largest population at 113, followed by the Rushukulya River in Ganjam district, with 15 dolphins and finally, Balasore, with 5 individuals. The dolphin species sighted during the state-wide census included the Irrawaddy, the Bottle Nose and the Humpback.
- **Key facts:** Dolphins have been included in Schedule I of the Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972, in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), in Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and categorised as 'Endangered' on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List.

WHO issues new international standard for music devices

- **The aim** behind the move is to prevent young people from going deaf.
- **Among other things, the standard recommends:** Sound allowance" function: software that tracks the level and duration of the user's exposure to sound as a percentage used of a reference exposure.
- **Personalised profile:** an individualized listening profile, based on the user's listening practices, which informs the user of how safely (or not) he or she has been listening and gives cues for action based on this information. Volume limiting options: options to limit the volume, including automatic volume reduction and parental volume control.
- **General information:** information and guidance to users on safe listening practices, both through personal audio devices and for other leisure activities.
- **The WHO has recommended** that governments and manufacturers adopt the standard. It has also called on civil society organisations, particularly professional associations that promote hearing care, to play a role in advocating for the standard.
- **What necessitated this?** Nearly 50% of people aged 12-35 years — or 1.1 billion young people — are at risk of hearing loss due to prolonged and excessive exposure to loud sounds, including music they listen to through personal audio devices. Over five per cent of the world's population — or 466 million people — has disabling hearing loss; impacting on their quality of life. The majority live in low- and middle-income countries.
- **It is estimated** that by 2050, over 900 million people — or 1 in every 10 people — will have disabling hearing loss. Hearing loss which is not addressed poses an annual global cost of \$750 billion. Overall, it is suggested that half of all cases of hearing loss can be prevented through public health measures.

Oxytocin ban

- **What's the issue?** The Delhi high court had quashed the Centre's December 14, 2018 notification, which had banned its sale by private manufacturers and retail chemists, saying the sale was allowed. Essentially, this meant that only KAPL could produce the drug as there is no other public sector enterprise doing so. However, Delhi high court quashed the amended order too. The central government moved Supreme Court against the Delhi high court order.
- **What's the concern now?** KAPL has said bulk production of the drug would take three-four years. This would put lives of many pregnant women at risk as it would lead to acute shortages.
- **With the ban**, the government did not adequately weigh in the danger of its order to the users of oxytocin, nor consider the deleterious effect of possible restricted supply if manufacture is confined to one unit on pregnant women and young mothers.

- **What can be done?** Strict control on illegal imports of the drug: Most of the veterinary use comes from illegal import of oxytocin from neighbouring countries. The misuse could be prevented through strict control in sale and end use of the drug especially prevention through clandestine channels.
- **About Oxytocin:** Oxytocin has also been dubbed the hug hormone, cuddle chemical, moral molecule, and the bliss hormone due to its effects on behavior, including its role in love and in female reproductive biological functions in reproduction. Oxytocin is a hormone that is made in the brain, in the hypothalamus. It is transported to, and secreted by, the pituitary gland, which is located at the base of the brain.
- **It acts both** as a hormone and as a brain neurotransmitter. The release of oxytocin by the pituitary gland acts to regulate two female reproductive functions: Childbirth and Breast-feeding.
- **Reasons behind the ban are:** Misuse in dairy industry: Oxytocin is a naturally-occurring hormone that causes uterine contractions during labour and helps new mothers lactate. However, the drug is misused in the dairy industry where livestock is injected with Oxytocin to make them release milk at a time convenient to farmers. Oxytocin is also used to increase the size of vegetables such as pumpkins, watermelons, eggplants, gourds, and cucumbers.

Wasted effort: half of India's waste-to-energy plants defunct

- **Key findings:** Since 1987, 15 WTE plants have been set up across the country. However, seven of these plants have since shut down. Apart from Delhi, these include plants at Kanpur, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Vijayawada and Karimnagar. The key reasons for closure are the plants' inability to handle mixed solid waste and the high cost of electricity generated by them that renders it unattractive to power companies.
- **This track record,** however, has not stopped the government from betting big on WTE. The NITI Aayog, as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission, envisages 800 megawatt from WTE plants by 2018-19, which is 10 times the capacity of all the existing WTE plants put together.
- **It also proposes** setting up a Waste-to-Energy Corporation of India, which would construct incineration plants through PPP models. Currently, there are 40-odd WTE plants at various stages of construction.
- **Reasons for the inefficiency:** The fundamental reason (for the inefficiency of these plants) is the quality and composition of waste. MSW (municipal solid waste) in India has low calorific value and high moisture content. As most wastes sent to the WTE plants are unsegregated, they also have high inert content. These wastes are just not suitable for burning in these plants. To burn them, additional fuel is required which makes these plants expensive to run.
- **Why Waste to Energy?** Most wastes that are generated find their way into land and water bodies without proper treatment, causing severe water and air pollution. The problems caused by solid and liquid wastes can be significantly mitigated through the adoption of environment-friendly waste to energy technologies that will allow treatment and processing of wastes before their disposal.
- **The environmental benefits** of waste to energy, as an alternative to disposing of waste in landfills, are clear and compelling. Waste to energy generates clean, reliable energy from a renewable fuel source, thus reducing dependence on fossil fuels, the combustion of which is a major contributor to GHG emissions.
- **These measures would** reduce the quantity of wastes, generate a substantial quantity of energy from them, and greatly reduce pollution of water and air, thereby offering a number of social and economic benefits that cannot easily be quantified.
- **Some of the strategic and financial benefits from waste-to-energy business are:** Profitability – If the right technology is employed with optimal processes and all components of waste are used to derive value, waste to energy could be a profitable business. When government incentives are factored in, the attractiveness of the business increases further.
- **Government Incentives** – The government of India already provides significant incentives for waste to energy projects, in the form of capital subsidies and feed in tariffs. With concerns on climate change, waste management and sanitation on the increase, the government incentives for this sector is only set to increase in future.
- **Related Opportunities** – Success in municipal solid waste management could lead to opportunities in other waste such as sewage waste, industrial waste and hazardous waste. Depending on the technology/route used for energy recovery, eco-friendly and "green" co-products such as charcoal, compost, nutrient rich digestate (a fertilizer) or bio-oil can be obtained. These co-product opportunities will enable the enterprise to expand into these related products, demand for which are increasing all the time.
- **Emerging Opportunities** – With distributed waste management and waste to energy becoming important priorities, opportunities exist for companies to provide support services like turnkey solutions. In addition, waste to energy opportunities exist not just in India but all over the world. Thus, there could be significant international expansion possibilities for Indian companies, especially expansion into other Asian countries.
- **The growth of this sector has been affected on account of the following limitations/ constraints:** Waste-to-Energy is still a new concept in the country; Most of the proven and commercial technologies in respect of urban wastes are required to be imported;

- **The costs of the projects** especially based on bio-methanation technology are high as critical equipment for a project is required to be imported. In view of low level of compliance of MSW Rules 2000 by the Municipal Corporations/ Urban Local Bodies, segregated municipal solid waste is generally not available at the plant site, which may lead to non-availability of waste-to-energy plants.
- **Lack of financial resources** with Municipal Corporations/Urban Local Bodies. Lack of conducive policy guidelines from State Governments in respect of allotment of land, supply of garbage and power purchase / evacuation facilities.

World Sustainable Development Summit

- **World Sustainable Development Summit:** The World Sustainable Development Summit is the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). World Sustainable Development Summit is the sole Summit on global issues taking place in the developing world.
- **It provides** a platform for global leaders and practitioners to discuss and deliberate over climatic issues of universal importance. It strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of the global community by assembling the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform.
- **It is continuing** the legacy of Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) which was initiated in 2001 with the aim of making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal.
- **The Energy and Resources Institute – TERI:** The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) is a leading think tank dedicated to conducting research for sustainable development of India and the Global South. TERI was established in 1974 as an information centre on energy issues. However, over the following decades, it made a mark as a research institute, whose policy and technology solutions transformed people's lives and the environment.

Selenium:

- **Context:** Scientists have found that nanoparticles of selenium, an essential micronutrient, can be used as an antibacterial agent. Scientists found that selenium nanoparticles, owing to their unique structure and properties, may be more effective than antibiotics as they have a larger surface area and therefore can be more in contact with the external environment.
- **Key facts:** Selenium is found naturally in wheat, eggs, cheese, nuts and sea food. It is an antioxidant and immunity booster.



Examining the anti-trafficking Bill, 2018

- **The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018** is listed for passage in Rajya Sabha today. Earlier this year, the Bill was introduced and passed in Lok Sabha. It provides for the prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation of trafficked persons. If the Bill is not passed today, it will lapse with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha. In this post, we analyse the Bill in its current form.
- **What was the need for a new law?** According to the National Crime Records Bureau, 8,132 human trafficking cases were reported in India in 2016 under the Indian Penal Code, 1860.[i] In the same year, 23,117 trafficking victims were rescued. Of these, the highest number of persons were trafficked for forced labour (45.5%), followed by prostitution (21.5%). Table 1 provides details of persons trafficked for various purposes (as of 2016).
- **In India**, the offence of trafficking is dealt with under different laws. Trafficking is primarily an offence under the Indian Penal Code, 1860. It defines trafficking to include recruiting, transporting, or harboring persons by force or other means, for exploitation. In addition, there are a range of laws presently which deal with bonded labour, exploitation of children, and commercial sexual exploitation. Each of these laws operate independently, have their own enforcement machinery and prescribe penalties for offences related to trafficking.
- **In 2015**, pursuant to a Supreme Court order, the Ministry of Women and Child Development constituted a Committee to identify gaps in the current legislation on trafficking and to examine the feasibility of a comprehensive legislation on trafficking.[ii] Consequently, the Trafficking Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Ms. Maneka Gandhi in July, 2018.
- **What does the Bill seek to do?** The Bill provides for the investigation of trafficking cases, and rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked victims. It includes trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, slavery, or forced removal of organs. In addition, the law also considers trafficking for certain purposes, such as for begging or for inducing early sexual maturity, to be an aggravated form of trafficking. These forms of trafficking attract a higher punishment.
- **In order to punish trafficking**, the Bill provides for the setting up of investigation and rehabilitation authorities at the district, state and national level. The primary investigation responsibility lies with anti-trafficking police officers and anti-trafficking units constituted at the district level. The authority at the national level can take over investigation of cases referred to it by two or more states.
- **The Bill also provides** for the setting up of Protection Homes and Rehabilitation Homes to provide care and rehabilitation to the victims. The Bill supplements the rehabilitation efforts through a Rehabilitation Fund, which will be used to set up the Protection and Rehabilitation Homes. Special Courts will be designated in every district to complete trial of trafficking cases within a year.
- **Additionally, the Bill** specifies penalties for various offences including for promotion of trafficking and trafficking with the aid of media. All offences are cognizable (i.e. police officer can arrest without a warrant) and non-bailable. If a person is found guilty under the Bill and also under any other law, the punishment which is higher will apply to the offender.
- **How does the Bill compare with existing trafficking laws?** The current Bill does not replace but adds to the existing legal framework. As discussed above, currently a range of laws deal with various aspects of trafficking. For instance, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986 covers trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation while the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 deals with punishment for employment of bonded labour. These laws specify their own procedures for enforcement and rehabilitation.
- **One of the challenges** with the Bill is that these laws will continue to be in force after the Bill. Since each of these laws have different procedures, it is unclear as to which procedure will apply in certain cases of trafficking. This may result in overlap in implementation of these laws. For instance, under the ITPA, 1986, Protective Homes provide for rehabilitation of victims of sexual exploitation. The Bill also provides for setting up of Protection Homes. When a victim of sexual exploitation is rescued, it is not clear as to which of these Homes she will be sent to. Further, each of these laws designate special courts to hear offences. The question arises as to which of these courts will hear the case.
- **Are the offences in the Bill reasonably tailored?** As discussed earlier, the Bill imposes penalties for various offences connected with trafficking. One of the offences states that if trafficking is committed on a premise, it will be presumed that the owner of the premise had knowledge of the offence. The implication of this would be that if an owner lives in a different city, say Delhi, and lets out his house in Mumbai to another person, and this person is discovered to be detaining girls for sexual exploitation on the premise, it will be presumed that the owner knew about the commission of the offence. In such circumstances, he will have to prove that he did not know about the offence being committed on his premise. This provision is a departure from the standard principle in criminal law where the guilt of the accused has to be proved and not presumed.

- **There are other laws** where the owner of a property is presumed guilty. However, the prosecution is required to prove certain facts before presuming his guilt. For instance, under the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 it is presumed that the owner has knowledge of an offence committed on his property. However, the Bill clarifies that the presumption will only apply if the prosecution can prove that the accused was connected with the circumstances of the case. For instance, an owner of a truck is not presumed to be guilty only because his truck was used for transporting drugs.[iii] However, he may be considered guilty if he was also driving the truck in which drugs were transported.[iv] The Bill does not contain such safeguards and this provision may therefore violate Article 21 of the Constitution which requires that laws which deprive a person of his life or personal liberty should be fair and reasonable.[v]
- **Does the Bill provide any protection to trafficking victims compelled to commit crimes?** The Bill provides immunity to a victim who commits an offence punishable with death, life imprisonment or imprisonment for 10 years. Immunity to victims is desirable to ensure that they are not prosecuted for committing crimes which are a direct consequence of them being trafficked.[vi] However, the Bill provides immunity only for serious crimes. For instance, a trafficked victim who commits murder under coercion of his traffickers may be able to claim immunity from being tried for murder. However, if a trafficked victim commits petty theft (e.g. pickpocketing) under coercion of his traffickers, he will not be able to claim immunity.
- **Further, the immunity** is only available when the victim can show that the offence was committed under coercion, threat, intimidation or undue influence, and there was a reasonable apprehension of death or injury. Therefore, it may be argued that the threshold to claim immunity from prosecution may be too high and may defeat the purpose for providing such immunity.

LADIS – Least Available Depth Information System

- **LADIS and its significance:** Initially LAD information will be available for NW-1, NW-2, Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route and NW-3, along with the date of survey. The facility will be expanded to other NWs also.
- **LADIS will ensure** that real-time data on least available depths is disseminated for ship/barge and cargo owners so that they can undertake transportation on NWs in a more planned way. Details of LAD will be fed into the portal by respective surveyors and regional incharge deputed with IWAI survey vessels which constantly move on NWs.
- **Significance:** IWAI has designed LADIS to facilitate the day to day operations of inland vessels plying on National Waterways and to avoid any hindrance in service and operation.
- **An assured depth** of waterway is required for seamless movement of vessels. If real time information is made available regarding LADs in stretches of various NWs, it will help transporters by guiding them on the suitability of time of movement.
- **It will enhance** credibility and efficiency of information sharing to achieve seamless operations on National Waterways, besides pre-empting problems that may occur during movement of vessels.

Pahari Dam Modernization Project

- **About the project:** Pahari Dam is a water storage dam situated on Dhasan River in Jhansi district. The Dhasan River is a right bank tributary of the Betwa River. The river originates in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Significance:** The project will benefit farmers by reducing the water leakage from the dam and make more water available for the farmers.

Tagore award

- **About the Tagore award:** The annual award was instituted by the Government of India during the commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.
- **The first Tagore Award** was conferred on Pt. Ravi Shankar, the Indian Sitar Maestro in 2012 and second was conferred on Shri Zubin Mehta in 2013. The award carries an amount of Rs. 1 crore, a citation in a scroll, a plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/ handloom item.

- **The award is open** to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or sex. Awardees are selected by a jury headed by the Prime Minister of India.

Vande Bharat Express

- **Vande Bharat Express:** It is India's first indigenously built engineless semi-high speed train. Earlier, it was known by the name Train 18. It runs between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160 kmph. It has been built by the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, in a record time of 20 months.
- **The train is a 100% 'Make in India'** project and is claimed to be built at half the cost of a similar train set that is imported. It is energy-efficient as its coaches will be fitted with LED lights. Coaches will have automatic doors and retractable footsteps. It will be inter-connected with fully sealed gangways along with a GPS-based Passenger Information System. It is provided with Bio toilets.

Government liberalizes the e-Visa regime

- **Important modifications made are highlighted as under:** Duration of stay in India of e-Tourist and e-Business Visas is maximum upto 1 Year with multiple entry subject to the stay stipulations. Also, the existing restriction of allowing foreigner for a maximum of three times has also been removed.
- **Changes in e-Tourist Visa:** On e-Tourist Visa continuous stay during each visit shall not exceed 90 days in case of nationals of all countries who are eligible for grant of e-visa except nationals of USA, UK, Canada and Japan. In case of nationals of USA, UK, Canada and Japan continuous stay during each visit shall not exceed 180 days. In all cases no registration will be required.
- **Changes in e-Business Visa:** Continuous stay during each visit shall not exceed 180 days in case of nationals of all countries who are eligible for grant of e-visa. No registration will be required if the stay is for a period of less than 180 days.
- **Other changes:** e-Visa is valid for entry through 2 (two) more designated Airports (Bhubaneswar and Port Blair) raising the total number of such airports to 28. Attending Destination wedding under normal e-Tourist visa or Tourist visa- No separate category of Destination Wedding Visa
- **Foreign nationals** who fall sick during their stay in India can now avail medical treatment without converting their visa into Medical Visa. This would take care of sudden medical emergencies. Visa-on-Arrival facility extended to the nationals of the Republic of Korea.

Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- **The bill aims** to address various deficiencies in the management of the National Memorial and to ensure that the Trust is an apolitical entity.
- **Background:** Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951 provided for the erection of a National Memorial in memory of those killed or wounded on April 13, 1919, in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar.
- **The 1951 Act** also provided for a Trust to manage the National Memorial. The Trust as per the 1951 Act included the Prime Minister, as Chairperson, (ii) the President of the Indian National Congress, (iii) the Minister in-charge of Culture, (iv) the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, (v) the Governor of Punjab, (vi) the Chief Minister of Punjab, and (vii) three eminent persons nominated by the central government.
- **Changes:** The 2018 amendment bill removes the President of the Indian National Congress as a Trustee. It clarifies that when there is no Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, the leader of the single largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha will be the Trustee. The 1951 act provided that the three eminent persons nominated by the central government will have a term of five years and will be eligible for re-nomination. The 2018 bill added a clause to allow the central government to terminate the term of a nominated trustee before the expiry of his term without assigning any reason.

Why only bureaucrats on information panels, asks SC

- **What's the issue?** There's "official bias" in favour of bureaucrats and government employees in the process of appointment. In fact, the selection committee, which shortlists candidates for appointment, is itself composed of government employees.
- **This is against** the fundamental principles of the Right to Information Act of 2005 which itself requires people from varied domains to man the Commissions. Besides, the entire RTI mechanism has been choked by rising pendency and growing number of vacancies of Information Commissioners.
- **What next?** RTI law was enacted to ensure accountability in governance. The Commissions are meant to be the law's eyes and hands to provide information to ordinary people. Therefore, the apex court has directed the government to look beyond bureaucrats and appoint professionals from "all walks of life," including eminent persons with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism as Information Commissioners.
- **About Central Information Commission (CIC):** Established in 2005 by Central Government under provisions of Right to Information (RTI) Act (2005).
- **It acts upon complaints** from those individuals who have not been able to submit information requests due to either the officer not having been appointed, or because the respective Officer refused to receive the application for information under the RTI Act. Composition: The Commission includes 1 Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and not more than 10 Information Commissioners (IC) who are appointed by the President of India.
- **Appointment:** CIC and members are appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of a committee consisting of—Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha; a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

MFN status

- **What is Most Favoured Nation status?** Most Favoured Nation is a treatment accorded to a trade partner to ensure non-discriminatory trade between two countries vis-a-vis other trade partners.
- **The importance** of MFN is shown in the fact that it is the first clause in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Under WTO rules, a member country cannot discriminate between its trade partners. If a special status is granted to a trade partner, it must be extended to all members of the WTO.
- **MFN at the same time allows some exemptions as well:** Right to engage in Free Trade Agreements: This means members can participate in regional trade agreements or free trade agreements where there is discrimination between member countries and non-member countries.
- **Members can** give developing countries special and differential treatment like greater market access. This special concession are in different forms like reduced tariff rates from developing country imports, concessions that allows developing countries to give subsidies to their production sectors etc. All these exceptions are subjected to strict conditions.
- **What are the pros of MFN?** MFN status is extremely gainful to developing countries. The clear upsides are access to a wider market for trade goods, reduced cost of export items owing to highly reduced tariffs and trade barriers. These essentially lead to more competitive trade.
- **MFN also cuts down** bureaucratic hurdles and various kinds of tariffs are set at par for all imports. It then increases demands for the goods and giving a boost to the economy and export sector. It also heals the negative impact caused to the economy due to trade protectionism. This irks the domestic industry. A country that grants MFN on imports will have its imports provided by the most efficient supplier. This may not be the case if tariffs differ by country.
- **Granting MFN has** domestic benefits: having one set of tariffs for all countries simplifies the rules and makes them more transparent. It also lessens the frustrating problem of having to establish rules of origin to determine which country's part of the product (that may contain parts from all over the world) must be attributed to for customs purpose. As MFN clause promotes non-discrimination among countries, they also tend to promote the objective of free trade in general.
- **What are the disadvantages of MFN?** The main disadvantage is that the country has to give the same treatment to all other trade partners who are members of the WTO. This translates into a price war and vulnerability of the domestic industry as a result. The country is not able to protect domestic industry from the cheaper imports and in this price war, some domestic players have to face heavy losses or growth restrictions.
- **What does revoking MFN mean?** Revoking it means India can levy whatever import tariffs it wants. India can now make it very expensive for Pakistan to export its goods or services to India.

- **Will this hurt Pakistan?** So far, India has only revoked the MFN status. It has not altered the import duties on Pakistan. However, if it does hike them, then this will likely have an impact on that country.
- **What is the State of MFN Status Between India and Pakistan?** India had granted MFN status to Pakistan in 1996, a year after the formation of WTO. But Pakistan hasn't accorded MFN status to India till now.

NASA's Mars Rover Opportunity Concludes a 15-Year Mission

- **This marked** the conclusion of the 15-year saga. The decision to end the mission was made after all the efforts to restore contact with the Opportunity Mars rover didn't yield desired results.
- **Why the NASA lost the contact with Opportunity?** A historic global dust storm reached the location of the Opportunity rover on Mars. The storm darkened the skies and cut off of the rover's solar power. All the efforts of NASA to restore the rover did not yield positive results.
- **Things worsened** with the onset of the winter at the location of the Opportunity rover. The reduced sunlight and colder temperatures during winter made it unlikely for the recovery of the Opportunity rover.
- **About the Mission:** Opportunity was the second of the twin Mars Exploration Rovers to land on Mars in January 2004. It landed 90 days after its twin rover Spirit landed. Spirit landed at Gusev Crater and Opportunity landed on the opposite side of Mars at Meridiani Planum.
- **NASA expected 90-day** lifetimes for the rovers. Both Opportunity and Spirit far exceeded their expected lifetime. Spirit's mission ended in May 2011 after travelling eight kilometres and Opportunity had logged 45 kilometres before losing contact in June 2018.

First District Cooling System of India to come up in Amaravati:

- **What is District cooling system?** District cooling systems produce chilled water, steam or hot water at a central plant and then pipe that energy out (either underground or over rooftops) to buildings for air conditioning, space heating and water heating. As a result, these buildings don't require their own chillers, air conditioners, boilers or furnaces.
- **They are considered** to be highly efficient to address each of the challenges like high Capital and operating costs, reliability, flexibility and environmental sustainability while meeting their comfort and process cooling and heating needs.
- **District cooling** uses only 50% of primary energy consumption for cooling urban building n compared to other cooling systems. This also reduces carbon emissions.

SC verdict over Tussle between Delhi and Centre:

- **Context:** A Supreme Court Bench has given a split opinion on whether the Delhi government has control over the administration's services and decided to refer the question to a larger Bench.
- **Two judges-** While Justice Bhushan held that the Delhi government has no power over services, observing that Entry 41 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution — dealing with 'State Public Services' — was outside the purview of the Delhi Assembly, Justice Sikri, the lead judge on the Bench, took the middle path.
- **What the Court said?** The three areas over which the Delhi government will enjoy powers: Appointment of special public prosecutors or law officers. Fixing land revenue rate. Power to appoint or deal with electricity commission or board.

- **Powers given to the Centre:** Delhi Anti- Corruption Branch cannot probe central government employees. Centre has the power to appoint enquiry commission.
- **What has been referred to the larger bench?** Control over service matters involving transfers and posting of officers.
- **What does the constitution say on this?** It is administered under Article 239 AA. Article 239 AA was incorporated in the Constitution in 1992. It creates a "special" constitutional set up for Delhi.
- **It has provisions** for popularly elected assembly, a council of ministers responsible to the assembly and a certain demarcation of responsibilities between the LG and the council of ministers. As per Article 239 AA (3) (a), the Delhi assembly can legislate on all those matters listed in the State List and Concurrent List as are applicable to union territories. The public order, police and land are reserved for the LG. This special set up worked well mainly because the same party held office at the Centre as well as in Delhi for much of the time. Things changed when different government ruled the city and the centre.
- **Brief history:** In 1911, Delhi became capital of India, headed by a Commissioner and then known as "Chief Commissioner's Province." In key legislations of that era, in 1919 and 1935, Delhi was seen as a centrally-administered territory.
- **In 1950 Delhi** became a Part C state but in 1951 this category was abolished. All C-states got their own Legislative Assembly. Delhi did not have powers over public order, police, public utility authorities, lands and buildings and over offences and court jurisdictions related to these subjects.
- **In 1956 the States** Reorganisation Act was passed along with the 7th Amendment to the Constitution. Now Delhi became a Union Territory. This means, it was headed by an Administrator appointed by the President. In 1966 the Delhi Administration Act came into the picture, giving Delhi a Metropolitan Council with 56 elected and 5 nominated members. In 1987 the Balakrishnan Committee held that Delhi has a "special status" within the Constitutional scheme.
- **If there are differences:** Generally, the administrator is merely a figurehead. But Article 239 says that the President, through the administrator, was ultimately responsible for good administration. Hence, Balakrishnan Committee notes that the Administrator in Delhi's scheme of things had a "somewhat more active part" while the President would have the final say. This was the scheme provided for in 1951, 1963 and also in 1978.



Three important initiatives on women's safety conceptualized by the WCD Ministry to be launched tomorrow

- **The Ministry of Women and Child Development** has conceptualized several initiatives to promote safety of women in their living spaces, working spaces and the public spaces. Three of these important initiatives will be launched jointly by the Home Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh and WCD Minister, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi in New Delhi tomorrow.
- **Panic Button** The idea of having a panic button on the mobile phone was conceived way back in 2015 and after a series of deliberations with the Ministry of Telecom, mobile phone manufacturers and mobile telephony service providers, the Ministry of Telecom mandated a physical panic button on all mobile phones in the country.
- **It was also** noted that such a panic button must be backed by an emergency response mechanism through the local police when panic button message would alert the specified family members etc.
- **of a woman** in distress situation. This system was then conceptualized in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs and state governments were asked to put in place a dedicated Emergency Response Centre through which the entire system will be operated. The emergency response system can be triggered in the following manners:-
- **On the smart phones**, the power button (which is dedicated panic button) when pressed three times quickly. Dialing 112 from any phone. In case of feature phones, long press of the touch key 5 or 9. Using 112 India Mobile App which is available for free downloading.
- **The emergency message** coming out of the above modes, will trigger a response from the emergency response centre through a team of trained personnel who can handle emergency requests of various kinds and get the necessary relief services launched. For Women and children, 112 India App provides a special SHOUT feature which alerts registered volunteers in the vicinity of victim for immediate assistance.
- **The emergency** response system was soft launched in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland recently and is being launched in 14 more states on 19.02.2019. A total amount of Rs.321.69 crores has been provided for this initiative through the Nirbhaya fund.

Guidelines on Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

- **In this regard**, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has made amendments to the Model Building Byelaws (MBBL) 2016 and Urban Regional Development Plans Formulation and Implementation (URDPFI) Guidelines 2014, making provisions for establishing EV charging infrastructure.
- **Key Features of the Guidelines:** A public charging station should be on both sides of the highways or roads on every 25 km.
- **For long range** and heavy-duty electric vehicles, there should be at least one station on each side of the highway every 100 kilometres.
- **Charging facilities** will also be available at bus depots and transport hubs within three years. In the first phase, to be completed by 2021, mega cities — with a population of over 4 million as per the 2011 census — will be covered.
- **The government** has also permitted private charging at residences and offices.
- **Significance of these guidelines:** The centre estimates that 25% of the total vehicles on roads will be electric vehicles by 2030. This necessitates the erection of robust electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure across the country. The guidelines are a step forward in this direction.

- **Besides**, India is committed to United Nations' goal to take urgent action to combat climate change. Government has initiated several steps to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. One of such steps is to encourage environment-friendly electric cars.

Kannadigas to get priority in private sector jobs

- **Sarojini Mahishi** report had recommended granting primacy for the Kannadigas in the private sector jobs.
- **The government** would be incorporating the provisions to withdraw government concessions to the firms on non-compliance.
- **Sarojini Mahishi Report:** The Karnataka government had formed a committee headed by former union minister Sarojini Mahishi in 1983 to recommend job opportunities for Kannadigas in Karnataka.
- **The important recommendations of the committee included:** 100 per cent reservation for Kannadigas in all state government departments and PSUs.
- **100 per cent reservation** for Kannadigas for Group C and D jobs in Central government departments and PSUs.
- **A minimum 80 per cent** reservation for Kannadigas for Group B jobs in Central government departments and PSUs
- **65 per cent** reservation for Kannadigas for Group A jobs in Central government departments and PSUs.
- **All jobs** in the private sector to be reserved for Kannadigas barring, if necessary, senior/skilled positions.
- **What's the basis for this move?** Competition from outsiders: For at least over a decade, especially after Bangalore exploded on the national and global map as the most sought-after destination primarily for software development, it witnessed a huge population influx from all corners of India naturally upsetting the local and migrant balance and causing social friction primarily owing to economic reasons.
- **With not enough** jobs being created and the poor spread of those that are getting created, the pressure on, and in, relatively better-performing states is growing.
- **Issues associated with this policy:** By arm-twisting the private sector into forcibly hiring Kannadigas irrespective of merit or qualification, the indirect assumption seems to be that Kannadigas are incapable of finding jobs on their own merit or hard work.
- **Even as the move** will benefit the Kannadiga population, with 100% reservation, the private sector could suffer a setback as it would hinder choosing the best candidates, irrespective of the linguistic background or domicile of the person, to comply with the rule.
- **Also, once** it is enforced, there is no stopping other states from coming up with similar populist policies, even for white-collar jobs where merit is paramount for productivity. This could mean greater informalisation of labour, which in turn means greater insecurity for the same workers whose interests the Karnataka government is purportedly protecting with the move.
- **It would also** violate the landmark Indra Sawhney judgment of the Supreme Court which caps reservation "of any manner" at 50%.
- **The end result** of industry loss of confidence and business moving elsewhere would, of course, be a decline in the economic well-being of the Kannadiga blue-collar workers the policy is supposed to protect.

Scientists discover massive mountains under Earth's crust

- **About the discovery:** These newly discovered mountains are located between upper and lower mantle. Scientists used data from an enormous earthquake in Bolivia to find mountains and other topography on a layer located 660 km straight down, which separates the upper and lower mantle.
- **Data from earthquakes** that are magnitude 7.0 or higher sends shockwaves in all directions that can travel through the core to the other side of the planet — and back again.

- **Lacking** a formal name for this layer, the researchers simply call it "the 660-km boundary."
- **Implications:** The presence of roughness on the 660-km boundary has significant implications for understanding how our planet formed and evolved.
- **What are earthquake waves? Earthquake waves are basically of two types – body waves and surface waves.** Body waves: They are generated due to the release of energy at the focus and moves in all directions traveling through the body of the earth. Hence, the name – body waves. They travel only through the interior of the earth. Body waves are faster than surface waves and hence they are the first to be detected on a seismograph. There are two types of body waves as primary waves and secondary waves.
- **Surface Waves:** When the body waves interact with surface rocks, a new set of waves is generated called as surface waves. These waves move along the earth surface. Surface waves are also transverse waves in which particle movement is perpendicular to the wave propagation. Hence, they create crests and troughs in the material through which they pass.
- **Surface waves** are considered to be the most damaging waves. Two common surface waves are Love waves and Rayleigh waves.

Finance Commission of India

- **What is the Finance Commission?** The Finance Commission is constituted by the President under article 280 of the Constitution, mainly to give its recommendations on distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the States and amongst the States themselves.
- **Two distinctive features** of the Commission's work involve redressing the vertical imbalances between the taxation powers and expenditure responsibilities of the centre and the States respectively and equalization of all public services across the States.
- **What are the functions of the Finance Commission?** It is the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President as to: the distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds;
- **the principles** which should govern the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India;
- **the measures** needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State; any other matter referred to the Commission by the President in the interests of sound finance.
- **The Commission** determines its procedure and have such powers in the performance of their functions as Parliament may by law confer on them.
- **Who appoints the Finance Commission and what are the qualifications for Members?** The Finance Commission is appointed by the President under Article 280 of the Constitution. As per the provisions contained in the Finance Commission [Miscellaneous Provisions] Act, 1951 and The Finance Commission (Salaries & Allowances) Rules, 1951, the Chairman of the Commission is selected from among persons who have had experience in public affairs, and the four other members are selected from among persons who:
 - **are, or have been, or are qualified to be appointed as Judges of a High Court; or** have special knowledge of the finances and accounts of Government; or have had wide experience in financial matters and in administration; or have special knowledge of economics
- **The recommendations of the Finance Commission are implemented as under:** Those to be implemented by an order of the President: The recommendations relating to distribution of Union Taxes and Duties and Grants-in-aid fall in this category. Those to be implemented by executive orders: Other recommendations to be made by the Finance Commission, as per its Terms of Reference
- **When was the first Commission Constituted and how many Commissions have been Constituted so far?** The First Finance Commission was constituted vide Presidential Order dated 22.11.1951 under the chairmanship of Shri K.C. Neogy on 6th April, 1952. Fifteenth Finance Commissions have been Constituted so far at intervals of every five years.
- **Why is there a need for a Finance Commission?** The Indian federal system allows for the division of power and responsibilities between the centre and states. Correspondingly, the taxation powers are also broadly divided between the centre and states. State legislatures may devolve some of their taxation powers to local bodies.
- **Formula used for distribution:** The share in central taxes is distributed among states based on a formula. Previous Finance Commissions have considered various factors to determine the criteria such as the population and income needs of states, their area and infrastructure, etc. Further, the weightage assigned to each criterion has varied with each Finance Commission.
- **The criteria used by the 11th to 14th Finance Commissions are:** Population is an indicator of the expenditure needs of a state. Over the years, Finance Commissions have used population data of the 1971 Census. The 14th Finance Commission used the 2011 population data, in addition to the 1971 data. The 15th Finance Commission has been mandated to use data from the 2011 Census.

- **Area is used** as a criterion as a state with larger area has to incur additional administrative costs to deliver services.
- **Income distance** is the difference between the per capita income of a state with the average per capita income of all states. States with lower per capita income may be given a higher share to maintain equity among states. Forest cover indicates that states with large forest covers bear the cost of not having area available for other economic activities. Therefore, the rationale is that these states may be given a higher share.
- **Grants-in-Aid:** Besides the taxes devolved to states, another source of transfers from the centre to states is grants-in-aid. As per the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, grants-in-aid constitute 12% of the central transfers to states. The 14th Finance Commission had recommended grants to states for three purposes: (i) disaster relief, (ii) local bodies, and (iii) revenue deficit.

Azov sea

- **The Ukraine-Russia** conflict flared up when Russian forces seized three Ukrainian vessels and captured two dozen sailors as they tried to pass from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov.
- **About the conflict in the Sea of Azov:** Ukraine and Russia accuse each other of violating international maritime law. They refer to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which both states joined in the 1990s.
- **Ukraine insists** on freedom of movement in the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov in accordance with this agreement, while the Russian side is trying to draw territorial borders. The countries also have a bilateral agreement on the free use of the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov, an accord that Russia has never called into question.
- **Why the Kerch Strait is important?** The Kerch Strait is the only connection between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and the only way to reach two important Ukrainian ports, Mariupol and Berdiansk. Russia has controlled the strait since annexing Crimea in 2014, which has made traffic significantly more difficult for Ukrainian ships.
- **About Sea of Azov:** It is a sea in Eastern Europe. To the south it is linked by the narrow (about 4 km or 2.5 mi) Strait of Kerch to the Black Sea, and it is sometimes regarded as a northern extension of the Black Sea. The sea is bounded in the north and in the west by Ukraine, in the east by Russia.
- **The Don and Kuban** are the major rivers that flow into it. The Sea of Azov is the shallowest sea in the world, with the depth varying between 0.9 and 14 metres.

International Court of Justice

- **About ICJ:** What is it? The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the UN. Established in 1946 to replace the Permanent Court of International Justice, the ICJ mainly operates under the statute of its predecessor, which is included in the UN Charter.
- **It has two primary functions:** to settle legal disputes submitted by States in accordance with established international laws, and to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organizations.
- **Members of the Court:** The International Court of Justice is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. These organs vote simultaneously but separately. In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both bodies. In order to ensure a measure of continuity, one third of the Court is elected every three years. Judges are eligible for re-election.
- **Who nominates the candidates?** Every state government, party to the Charter, designates a group who propose candidates for the office of ICJ judges. This group includes four members/jurists of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (machinery which enables arbitral tribunals to be set up as desired and facilitates their work) also picked by the State. Countries not part of the statute follow the same procedure where a group nominates the candidates.
- **Each group** is limited to nominate four candidates, two of whom could be of their nationality. Within a fixed duration set by the Secretary-General, the names of the candidates have to be sent to him/her.
- **What are the qualifications of ICJ judges?** A judge should have a high moral character. A judge should fit to the qualifications of appointment of highest judicial officers as prescribed by their respective states or. A judge should be a juriconsult of recognized competence in international law.

- **The 15 judges of the Court are distributed as per the regions:** Three from Africa. Two from Latin America and Caribbean. Three from Asia. Five from Western Europe and other states. Two from Eastern Europe.
- **Independence of the Judges:** Once elected, a Member of the Court is a delegate neither of the government of his own country nor of that of any other State. Unlike most other organs of international organizations, the Court is not composed of representatives of governments. Members of the Court are independent judges whose first task, before taking up their duties, is to make a solemn declaration in open court that they will exercise their powers impartially and conscientiously.
- **In order** to guarantee his or her independence, no Member of the Court can be dismissed unless, in the unanimous opinion of the other Members, he/she no longer fulfils the required conditions. This has in fact never happened.

Policy bias against rainfed agriculture

- **The atlas** not only maps the agro biodiversity and socio-economic conditions prevailing in such areas, but also attempts to document the policy biases that are making farming unviable for many in these areas.
- **Challenges present:** Three out of five farmers in India grow their crops using rainwater, instead of irrigation. However, per hectare government investment into their lands may be 20 times lower, government procurement of their crops is a fraction of major irrigated land crops, and many of the government's flagship agriculture schemes are not tailored to benefit them.
- **There has been "negligence"** toward rainfed areas which is leading to lower incomes for farmers in these areas. Farmers in rainfed areas are receiving 40% less of their income from agriculture in comparison to those in irrigated areas.
- **Lands irrigated through** big dams and canal networks get a per hectare investment of ₹5 lakh. Watershed management spending in rainfed lands is only ₹18,000-25,000.
- **The difference** in yield is not proportionate to the difference in investment. When it comes to procurement, over the decade between 2001-02 and 2011-12, the government spent ₹5.4 lakh crore on wheat and rice. Coarse cereals, which are grown in rainfed areas, only had ₹3,200 crore worth of procurement in the same period.
- **Flagship government** schemes, such as seed and fertiliser subsidies and soil health cards, are designed for irrigated areas and simply extended to rainfed farmers without taking their needs into consideration.
- **What needs to be done?** A more balanced approach is needed to give rainfed farmers the same research and technology focus, and production support that their counterparts in irrigation areas have received over the last few decades.
- **In the long run**, cash incentives and income support like the PM-KISAN scheme announced in the budget are better than extensive procurement. While income support is important to help farmers through the current crisis, it is now the time to design better structured interventions for the future.

EXERCISE VAYU SHAKTI-2019:

- **Context: EXERCISE VAYU SHAKTI-2019 was held recently in Rajasthan.** Vayu Shakti is held by Indian Airforce. It demonstrates the IAF's ability to strike targets on the ground such as enemy convoys and tanks, radar stations, railway yards and military headquarters.
- **In news- Blackbuck: Key facts:** The blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*) is an antelope indigenous to the India plains. Also found in India, Nepal and Pakistan. The Females are generally hornless. It is considered to be the fastest animal next to Cheetah. It is of Least Concern according to the IUCN red list.

UPSC = Fever



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SCIM portal under Safe City Project

- **In order to provide** safety for women in public spaces, the Government has identified eight cities for implementation of Safe City project. The 8 major cities which have been chosen are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai. Detailed projects for this have been prepared jointly by the municipal bodies and the local police authorities. The projects include creation on ground assets & resources and mindset safety of women. Some of the key features of the safe city project include:
- **Identification of sensitive hot spots in each city**, Installation of CCTV surveillance covering the entire hot spot. Automated number plate reading machines to be deployed in extremely sensitive areas.
- **Intensive patrolling** in vulnerable areas beyond the identified hot spots. Improving street lighting and public toilet facilities for women. Others like setting up women help desks in police stations, augmentation of women support centres etc.
- **All the above measures** would be coordinated through an Integrated Smart Control Room in the city. In order to facilitate States to monitor and manage the Safe City projects and avoid duplication on ground, an online Safe City Implementation Monitoring (SCIM) portal has been developed by MHA which will also be launched tomorrow. SCIM will facilitate online tracking of deployment of assets and infrastructure created under the Safe City projects. SCIM facilitates an evidence based online monitoring system. SCIM also creates a digital repository of assets, infrastructure and social outreach programs, as well as best practices achieved in each City.
- **DNA Analysis Facilities in States** In view of the complaints of delay in cases of sexual assault investigations, it was proposed that dedicated DNA analysis facilities should be created in the forensic science laboratories on a mission mode. Timely testing of DNA samples from the crime scene is the quickest process of obtaining forensic evidence in cases of sexual assault on women.
- **In the initial phase**, dedicated DNA analysis facilities have been sanctioned for the forensic science laboratories located at Chennai, Madurai, Agra, Lucknow, Mumbai and Kolkata.
- **The equipments** to be provided under this initiative include refrigerated facility for samples, automated DNA extractor & sequencer, centrifuges, genetic analyzers etc. A sum of Rs.78.86 crores has been sanctioned for this initiative through the Nirbhaya fund.
- **Expert technicians** are also being recruited and trained for the forensic analysis.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

- **Background:** The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was set up on 19th February, 2004 through Constitution (89th Amendment) Act.
- **NCST leadership award:** On this occasion, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has also decided to institute a national award named as "NCST Leadership Award" which will be conferred for significant and exemplary services towards Scheduled Tribes in the country.
- **The awards** will be given in 3 categories i.e. (i) Educational Institutions/ Universities, (ii) Public Sector Undertakings/Banks and (iii) Public Service rendered by an Individual, NGO or Civil Society.
- **About NCST:** NCST was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003. By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely- (i) the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and (ii) the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST).

- **Composition:** The term of office of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and each member is three years from the date of assumption of charge. The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister and the Vice-Chairperson that of a Minister of State and other Members have the ranks of a Secretary to the Government of India.
- **Powers:** NCST is empowered to investigate and monitor matters relating to safeguards provided for STs under the Constitution or under other laws or under Govt. order. The Commission is also authorized to inquire into specific complaints relating to rights and safeguards of STs and to participate and advise in the Planning Process relating to socio-economic development of STs and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and States.
- **Report:** The commission submits its report to the President annually on the working of safeguards and measures required for effective implementation of Programmes/ Schemes relating to welfare and socio-economic development of STs.

Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme

- **The stakeholders** i.e. the NGOs receiving grant under DDRS, State Government Officers & District level officers will be participating.
- **Objectives of the conference:** To disseminate the provisions of the revised scheme and to sensitize various stake holders about it. To provide a unique opportunity for interactions amongst all stakeholders. To ensure exchange of cross-sectoral views on the aspects of the efficacy of the scheme as well as the scope of improvements in it.
- **About Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS):** "Scheme to Promote Voluntary Action for Persons with Disabilities" was revised and renamed as the "Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)".
- **The objectives of the scheme are:** To create an enabling environment to ensure equal opportunities, equity, social justice and empowerment of persons with disabilities. To encourage voluntary action for ensuring effective implementation of the People with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities and Protection of Rights) Act of 1995.
- **Approach and Strategy:** The approach of this Scheme is to provide financial assistance to voluntary organizations to make available the whole range of services necessary for rehabilitation of persons with disabilities including early intervention, development of daily living skills, education, skill-development oriented towards employability, training and awareness generation.
- **With a view** to inclusion of persons with disabilities in the mainstream of society and actualizing their potential, the thrust would be on education and training programmes.

Eco Circuit

- **Eco Circuit** is one of the fifteen thematic circuits identified for development under Swadesh Darshan Scheme- Integrated development of theme- based tourist circuits in the country.
- **Major works** carried out under the project includes Eco Adventure Tourism Park at Vagamon, Cultural Centre at Kadamannitta, Eco Log Huts at Peerumedu, Idukki, Approach Roads, Walking trails, Rain Shelters at Pine Valley Forest, Thekkady, Kumily, Moozhayar Dam, Penstock and Kakki Dam.
- **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. It leverages 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.



Government Drives Big Bang Reforms in Oil & Gas Sector

- **Decision** incorporates recommendations made by Committee on Enhancing Domestic Oil and Gas Exploration
- **The Union Cabinet** chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on Tuesday approved the Policy framework on reforms in exploration and licensing sector for enhancing domestic exploration and production of oil and gas.
- **The Cabinet decision** was based on the recommendations of a High-powered Committee on Enhancing Domestic Oil and Gas Exploration chaired by Vice-Chairman NITI Aayog and including the Cabinet Secretary, CEO, NITI Aayog, Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs and CMD, ONGC. The decision signals a paradigm shift in the core goal of the Government, moving from revenue-maximisation to production-maximisation, with focus on exploration. This will incentivise increased investment and production.
- **In Category I** basins where potential is established and production is taking place, to give boost to further exploration in unexplored areas of these basins, the weightage of revenue sharing has been reduced from 50% to 30%. Also, in order to ensure that revenue sharing does not disincentivise higher production, the maximum revenue sharing has been capped at 50%.
- **In the less prospective Category II** and Category III basins, revenue sharing has been totally dispensed with and allotment of basins would be solely based on the exploration work programme. On successful discovery, the production and full revenue will accrue to the operator, with Government asking for no share. This is apart from marketing and pricing freedom, which has been assured in all basins. Only in case there is windfall gain, and annual revenue exceeds USD 2.5 billion, government will take a share of additional revenue.
- **The Committee recommendations** had focussed on liberalising exploration and production regime, enhancing production from existing producing fields of NOCs and simplifying the approval processes, all of which has been accepted by the cabinet.
- **The cabinet decision** also gives complete marketing and pricing freedom to oil and gas production. In gas, it is also extended this to those fields whose first Field Development Plan (FDP) is yet to be approved. It also gives concession in the royalties in case the oil fields are brought to production earlier.
- **The production enhancement** scheme for nomination field of National Oil Companies (NOCs) is likely to augment production by leveraging new technology, capital and management practices through private sector participation. The NOCs will be held accountable for enhancing production through objective assessment of performance.
- **The cabinet** also decided to give 66 fields of NOCs to private operators for increasing the production. NOCs will get share in the increased production apart from getting what was being produced by them.
- **Through this policy**, a transparent, investor friendly and competitive policy framework is envisaged to accelerate exploration activities and provide impetus to expeditious production of oil and gas.
- **Integrating the recommendations** of NITI Aayog, the cabinet decision focuses on enhancing exploration & production activities, which would have massive macro-economic benefits in terms of development of support services, employment generation, transfer of advanced technology etc.
- **Continuing reforms in the oil** and gas sector includes further simplification of approval processes, with measures to be initiated for promoting ease of doing business through setting up coordination mechanism and simplification of approval of DGH, alternate dispute resolution mechanism etc.

Union Minister of State Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti inaugurates Sikaria Mega Food Park, the 1st Mega Food Park of Tripura

- **Union Minister of State** Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti inaugurates Sikaria Mega Food Park, the 1st Mega Food Park of Tripura
- **Background:** Under the Visionary guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Ministry of Food Processing Industries is focusing on boosting the food processing industry so that agriculture sector grows exponentially and become a major contributor to doubling the farmer's income and 'Make In India' initiative of the government.
- **To give a major boost** to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with particular focus on perishables, Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing Mega Food Park Scheme in the country. Mega Food Parks create modern infrastructure facilities for food processing along the value chain from farm to market with strong forward and backward linkages through a cluster based approach.
- **Common facilities** and enabling infrastructure is created at Central Processing Centre and facilities for primary processing and storage is created near the farm in the form of Primary Processing Centers (PPCs) and Collection Centers (CCs). Under the Scheme, Government of India provides financial assistance upto Rs. 50.00 Crore per Mega Food Park project.

Initiatives on women's safety conceptualized by the WCD Ministry

- **Panic button.** SCIM portal under Safe City Project. DNA Analysis Facilities in States.
- **Panic button:** Conceived way back in 2015, mobile phone manufacturers and mobile telephony service providers were mandated by the Ministry of Telecom to include a physical panic button on all mobile phones in the country. Such a panic button must be backed by an emergency response mechanism through the local police when panic button message would alert the specified family members etc. of a woman in distress situation.
- **The emergency response system can be triggered in the following manners:** On the smart phones, the power button when pressed three times quickly. Dialing 112 from any phone. In case of feature phones, long press of the touch key 5 or 9. Using 112 India Mobile App.
- **The emergency message** coming out of the above modes, will trigger a response from the emergency response centre through a team of trained personnel who can handle emergency requests of various kinds and get the necessary relief services launched.
- **SCIM portal under Safe City Project:** Being implemented in 8 cities, the project includes creation on ground assets & resources and mindset safety of women. Some of the key features of the safe city project include: Identification of sensitive hot spots in each city. Installation of CCTV surveillance covering the entire hot spot. Automated number plate reading machines to be deployed in extremely sensitive areas.
- **Intensive patrolling** in vulnerable areas beyond the identified hot spots. Improving street lighting and public toilet facilities for women. Others like setting up women help desks in police stations, augmentation of women support centres etc.
- **All the above measures** would be coordinated through an Integrated Smart Control Room in the city. In order to facilitate States to monitor and manage the Safe City projects and avoid duplication on ground, an online Safe City Implementation Monitoring (SCIM) portal has been developed by MHA.
- **SCIM will facilitate** online tracking of deployment of assets and infrastructure created under the Safe City projects. SCIM facilitates an evidence based online monitoring system. SCIM also creates a digital repository of assets, infrastructure and social outreach programs, as well as best practices achieved in each City.
- **DNA Analysis Facilities in States:** In view of the complaints of delay in cases of sexual assault investigations, it was proposed that dedicated DNA analysis facilities should be created in the forensic science laboratories on a mission mode. Timely testing of DNA samples from the crime scene is the quickest process of obtaining forensic evidence in cases of sexual assault on women. In the initial phase, dedicated DNA analysis facilities have been sanctioned for the forensic science laboratories located at Chennai, Madurai, Agra, Lucknow, Mumbai and Kolkata.

'Prevalence and Extent of Substance Use in India'¹- survey

- **The survey covered general population** (10-75 years), in all the 36 states and union territories covering over 2 lakh households and 4.73 lakh people in 186 districts of the country.
- **Key findings and highlights of the survey:** India is home to six crore alcohol addicts, more than the population of 172 world nations including Italy.

- **Alcoholism is a condition** that requires medical attention, but unfortunately only less than 3% of the people with drinking problem get any treatment. There is a large number of people in the country addicted to various drugs. More than 3.1 crore Indians (2.8%) have reported using cannabis products, Bhang, Ganja, Charas, Heroin and Opium, in last one year. Unfortunately only one in 20 drug addicts gets treatment at a hospital.
- **Country liquor** accounts for 30% of the total liquor consumption, and Indian made foreign liquor also account for the same amount.
- **In Punjab and Sikkim**, the prevalence of cannabis use disorders is considerably higher (more than thrice) than the national average. At the national level, Heroin is most commonly used substance followed by pharmaceutical opioids, followed by opium (Afeem).
- **Less than 1% or nearly 1.18 crore** people use sedatives, non medical or non prescription use. However, what is more worrying that its prevalence is high among children and adolescents. This problem of addiction of children is more prevalent in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Haryana.
- **Cocaine (0.10%) Amphetamine** Type Stimulants (0.18%) and Hallucinogens (0.12%) are the categories with lowest prevalence of current use in the country.
- **What has the government done in this regard?** The Government has taken several policy and other initiatives to deal with drug trafficking problem. It constituted Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) in November, 2016 and revived the scheme of "Financial Assistance to States for Narcotics Control".
- **In 2017**, the government approved new Reward Guidelines with increased quantum of reward for interdiction or seizure of different illicit drugs.
- **For effective** coordination with foreign countries, India has signed 37 Bilateral Agreements/Memoranda of Understanding.
- **Narcotics Control Bureau** has been provided funds for developing a new software i.e. Seizure Information Management System (SIMS) which will create a complete online database of drug offences and offenders.
- **The government** has constituted a fund called "National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse" to meet the expenditure incurred in connection with combating illicit traffic in Narcotic Drugs; rehabilitating addicts, and educating public against drug abuse, etc.
- **The government** is also conducting National Drug Abuse Survey to measure trends of drug abuse in India through Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment with the help of National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre of AllMS.
- **The Ministry of Social Justice** and Empowerment has drafted National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023) for addressing the problem of drug and substance abuse in the country, dumping a long-pending draft policy on the matter.

Central Wakf Council

- **What is it?** Central Wakf Council is a statutory body established in 1964 by the Government of India under Wakf Act, 1954 (now a sub section the Wakf Act, 1995).
- **It has been established** for the purpose of advising Centre on matters pertaining to working of the State Wakf Boards and proper administration of the Wakfs in the country.
- **It is a permanent** dedication of movable or immovable properties for religious, pious or charitable purposes as recognized by Muslim Law, given by philanthropists.
- **Composition and appointments:** The Council is headed by a Chairperson, who is the Union Minister in charge of Wakfs and there are maximum 20 other members, appointed by Government of India as stipulated in the Wakf Act.

'Vision Zero' concept

- **The conference** provides a forum for promoting safety and health at work by exchanging knowledge, practices and experience.
- **The Conference** has been organized by Directorate General Factory Advice and Labour Institutes (DGFASLI), Ministry of Labour and Employment, German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), Germany in association with Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay and International Social Security Association – Manufacturing, Construction and Mining.

- **What is 'Vision Zero' concept?** The concept of Vision Zero is based on four fundamental principles viz. life is non-negotiable, humans are fallible, tolerable limits are defined by human physical resistance, and people are entitled to safe transport and safe workplaces. The Vision is based on principles of Controlling Risks, Ensuring Safety and Health in Machines, Equipment and Workplaces and Skill Upgradation of Workforce.
- **Way ahead:** The concept of 'Vision Zero' is fast gaining international acceptance and is expected to leverage the efforts of the Government of India to raise the occupational safety and health standards in the country so as to improve the occupational safety and health situation.

International Solar Alliance

- **Argentina** is the 72nd country to sign the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance.
- **Background:** The agreement of the International Solar Alliance was opened for signature during the COP22 at Marrakech on November 15, 2016. The signatories of the agreement include India, France, Australia, UAE, UK, Japan amongst others.
- **About ISA:** The Paris Declaration establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.
- **Objectives:** The ISA's major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US\$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.
- **What it does?** As an action-oriented organisation, the ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.
- **When it entered into force?** When the ISA Framework Agreement entered into force on December 6th, 2017, ISA formally became a de-jure treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization, headquartered at Gurugram, India.

Rajasthan Social Accountability Bill

- **Objectives of the Bill:** To seek the accountability of public functionaries and authorities for timely delivery of goods and services. To create democratic, decentralized and participative approach to enable wider public participation.
- **To Initiate monitoring** of programmes and policies through community score cards, citizens report card and social audits.
- **Key provisions:** The purview of bill includes any entity or body, which is under the control of the government, governor and the high court of Rajasthan. Entity or the body set up by Central Government to function within the State of Rajasthan and partially or wholly providing public goods and services provided there is consent of the Central Government.
- **It seeks** to impose penalties and compensation and initiate departmental action against the Grievance Redressal Officer (GRO) of the service delivery department for non-compliance. For example: If the local police have failed to deliver it duties, the onus is on the GRO.
- **The Bill will** also set up a grievance redressal mechanism starting from village panchayats. The Bill included provisions for citizens' charter, public hearing, social audit and information and facilitation centres.
- **Significance of this law:** This law will compliment RTI which is becoming far more challenging. The citizen centric law will enable citizens to initiate enquiries rather than relying on the departmental enquires in the existing system.
- **What is social accountability?** "Social accountability" refers to actions initiated by citizen groups to hold public officials, politicians, and service providers to account for their conduct and performance in terms of delivering services, improving people's welfare and protecting people's rights.
- **Four pillars of social accountability?** The four pillars are: (1) organized and capable citizens groups; (2) an enabling environment, with government champions who are willing to engage; (3) cultural appropriateness; and, (4) access to information.

SC turns down petition on use of 'Dalit' by media

- **Background:** In its August 7, 2018, circular, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry had advised that the media should refrain from using the word "Dalit" for members belonging to Scheduled Castes and had directed that 'Scheduled Caste' should alone be used for all official transaction, matters, dealings, certificates for denoting the persons belonging to the community. It was questioned in the Supreme Court.
- **This advice** had come in compliance with a direction from the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court.
- **What does the petition say?** The plea said the word "Dalit" is a self-chosen name, used as a "positive self-identifier and as a political identity". The petitioner said the name represented the people who have been affected by the caste system and the practice of untouchability.
- **The debate over the use of word- Dalit:** The debate over the appropriateness of using the term 'Dalit' to refer to members of the Scheduled Castes is far from new.
- **A decade ago,** the National Commission for Scheduled Castes disfavoured the use of 'Dalit', which it felt was unconstitutional. This is because belonging to a 'Scheduled Caste' is a legal status conferred on members of castes named in a list notified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution. Therefore, arguably, 'Scheduled Caste' is the appropriate way to refer to this class of people in official communications and documents.
- **What's the issue with advisory issued?** The I&B Ministry's advisory is confusing as it uses the words "for all official transactions, matters", though the media's references to the community are usually beyond official contexts.
- **Way ahead:** It is inexplicable to oppose the use of the term 'Dalit' in the media and in non-official contexts — a nomenclature chosen and used by the community itself. Doing so lends itself to the charge that there is an attempt to deny the powerful and emotive meaning of the word Dalit.
- **The term** has evolved over a period of time and has come to symbolise different things in different contexts — self-respect, assertion, solidarity and opposition to caste oppression. In the past, Dalits were referred to as 'untouchables', but the official term during British rule was 'depressed classes'.
- **Mahatma Gandhi** sought to remove the stigma of 'pollution' by using the term 'Harijans', or 'children of god'. In course of time, the community rejected this appellation as patronising and sanctimonious. It was only some decades ago that they began to refer to themselves as Dalits.
- **'Dalit' literally** means 'downtrodden' or 'broken', but it is a word pregnant with meaning, reflecting the struggle of a community to reassert its identity and lay claim to the rights that were denied to them for centuries.

Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPSC)

- **What to study?** For Prelims and Mains: Stem cells, iPSC- meaning, functions, significance and potential.
- **Context:** Japan approves stem cells trial to treat spinal cord injuries. A team of Japanese researchers will carry out an unprecedented trial using human-induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) to treat spinal cord injuries.
- **What are induced pluripotent stem cells?** Induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) are adult cells that have been genetically reprogrammed to an embryonic stem cell-like state by being forced to express genes and factors important for maintaining the defining properties of embryonic stem cells.
- **Although** additional research is needed, iPSCs are already useful tools for drug development and modeling of diseases, and scientists hope to use them in transplantation medicine.
- **What are stem cells, and why are they important?** Stem cells have the remarkable potential to develop into many different cell types in the body during early life and growth. In addition, in many tissues they serve as a sort of internal repair system, dividing essentially without limit to replenish other cells as long as the person or animal is still alive. When a stem cell divides, each new cell has the potential either to remain a stem cell or become another type of cell with a more specialized function, such as a muscle cell, a red blood cell, or a brain cell.
- **Stem cells are distinguished from other cell types by two important characteristics:** First, they are unspecialized cells capable of renewing themselves through cell division, sometimes after long periods of inactivity. Second, under certain physiologic or experimental conditions, they can be induced to become tissue- or organ-specific cells with special functions. In some organs, such as the gut and bone marrow, stem cells regularly divide to repair and replace worn out or damaged tissues. In other organs, however, such as the pancreas and the heart, stem cells only divide under special conditions.
- **What are the similarities and differences between embryonic and adult stem cells?** One major difference between adult and embryonic stem cells is their different abilities in the number and type of differentiated cell types they can become. Embryonic stem cells can become all cell types of the body because they are pluripotent. Adult stem cells are thought to be limited to differentiating into different cell types of their tissue of origin.

- **Embryonic stem** cells can be grown relatively easily in culture. Adult stem cells are rare in mature tissues, so isolating these cells from an adult tissue is challenging, and methods to expand their numbers in cell culture have not yet been worked out. This is an important distinction, as large numbers of cells are needed for stem cell replacement therapies.

Fateh Submarine:

- **What is it?** It is a “state-of-the-art” domestically produced Iranian submarine capable of firing cruise missiles. It was unveiled recently in Bandar Abbas.
- **It is Iran’s** first submarine in the semi-heavy category. The underwater-vessel weighs nearly 600 tonnes and is equipped with torpedoes and naval mines in addition to cruise missiles. The submarine can operate more than 200 metres below sea level for up to 35 days.
- **It has subsurface-to-surface** missiles with a range of about 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles), making it capable in reaching Israel and U.S. military bases in the region.

Maiden ‘Regional Maritime-Safety Conference’:

- **Context:** Maiden ‘Regional Maritime-Safety Conference’ is being held in Mumbai. The Conference is being organized by India for the first time. Theme: ‘Regional Maritime-Safety Conference’.
- **The objective** of the conference is to deliberate on issues related to assuring maritime safety in the India-ASEAN sub region, safeguarding our shores and promoting trade along the sea routes. The conference will address a wide range of issues that affect regional maritime safety, including transport safety, maritime law, ship building, transportation of hazardous goods, marine oil spill, pollution and environmental safety.
- **The inaugural edition** is being organised by the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) in coordination with the Ministry of Shipping and the Ministry of External Affairs.

Not without an explanation: when judges recuse themselves:

- **Context:** Recently 3 Judges Recused themselves from hearing the case challenging the appointment of M. Nageswara Rao as interim director of the Central Bureau of Investigation.
- **Similar such incidents:** Justice U.U. Lalit recused himself from hearing the dispute over land in Ayodhya after senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan pointed out that the judge had appeared for former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh in a related contest. Two judges of the Gujarat High Court withdrew from a set of controversial cases by merely saying, “not before me.”
- **Concerns associated:** Often, judges don’t record their reasons for recusal in writing, allowing, in the process, leaving plenty of scope for conjecture and surmise. An unwarranted recusal, much like a failure to recuse when faced with genuine conflicts of interest, damage the rule of law.
- **To withdraw** from a case merely because a party suggests that a judge does so impair judicial fairness. It allows parties to cherry-pick a bench of their choice. A mistaken case of recusal can prove just as destructive to rule of law as those cases where a judge refuses a recusal despite the existence of bias.
- **Are there any rules in this regard?** There are no definite rules on recusals by Judges. Justice J. Chelameswar in his opinion in Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (2015) held that “Where a judge has a pecuniary interest, no further inquiry as to whether there was a ‘real danger’ or ‘reasonable suspicion’ of bias is required to be undertaken,”
- **Need of the hour:** Transparency in procedure is one of the major factors constituting the integrity of the office of a judge in conducting his duties and the functioning of the court, and so adopting a principle of disclosing reasons for recusal will augur well with it.

- **This will** also help curb the tendency of forum shopping when a mischievous litigant, wanting to avoid a judge because the judge is known to be very strong, could raise baseless submissions on the conflict of interest.
- **The basic principle of judicial conduct:** A judge should not have an interest in the litigation before him which could give rise to an apprehension of his deciding a matter in favour of one of the parties. Bias by interest falls into two broad classes. First, where the judge has a pecuniary interest in the subject matter of litigation and, second, wherefrom his association with or interest in one of the parties the judge may be perceived to have a bias in favour of that party.
- **Way ahead:** In taking the oath of office, judges, both of the Supreme Court and of the high courts, promise to perform their duties, to deliver justice, "without fear or favor, affection or ill-will".
- **Definite** rules need to be framed in this regard. Judges should express their decisions in writing.
- **Conclusion:** The nature of the judicial function involves the performance of difficult and at times unpleasant tasks, and to that end, judicial officers "must resist all manner of pressure, regardless of where it comes from.
- **This is the constitutional** duty common to all judicial officers. If they deviate, the independence of the judiciary would be undermined, and in turn, the Constitution itself."

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The Agricultural Science Congress marks the confluence of researchers, intellectuals and the custodians of global food security

- **Agricultural Science Congress** is nothing short of an Agri. Research Kumbh: - Radha Mohan Singh
- **Union Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Minister Shri Radha Mohan Singh** has said that the Agricultural Science Congress marks the confluence of researchers, intellectuals, creativity and the custodians of global food security. In his inaugural address of the 14th Agricultural Science Congress today he said that it is nothing short of an Agri-Research Kumbh. He stated the churning of science, technology and knowledge outcomes during this Congress will be of immense value to the welfare of farmers as well as humanity. He added that the government recently announced a new scheme PM-KISAN for assured income support to the farmers. The scheme is being implemented with effect from December 2018. A direct income support of Rs 6,000 per annum to the farmers will be provided. Around 12 crore farming families will be directly benefitted from this scheme.
- **Shri Singh appreciated** the role of ICAR in launching a mega project called NICRA to address the issues of climate change through the KVKs, adding that the "Soil Health Card Scheme" has been launched to improve crop productivity through judicious use of inputs without deteriorating soil health further. Shri Singh further said that the IARI has developed 'Pusa Soil Testing and Fertilizer Recommendation Meter' for facilitating the reach of soil testing at the farmers' doorstep. During the last 4 and a half years, 1014 varieties of different crops were developed among which more than 800 varieties are tolerant/resistant to biotic and abiotic stresses.
- **He expressed pride** in the IARI celebrating 50 years of remote sensing in India. The first national initiative on application of remote sensing technology was attempted way back in 1969 by IARI along with ISRO and NASA for the early diagnosis of root (wilt) disease in coconut at Kayamkulam, Kerala.
- **The Minister** said that value-addition to agricultural production is one of the solutions for improving farmers' income. The implementation of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sampada Yojana will result in creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management. It will not only provide a big boost to the growth of food processing sector in the country but also help in providing better prices to farmers and is a big step towards doubling of farmers' income. He further said that the agri-based start-ups and entrepreneurship development need to be promoted and the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) including Self-Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU) is government's endeavour to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Innovations will play a critical role in developing solutions and pathways for addressing the agrarian challenges.

HRD Minister launches Operation Digital Board

- **Operation Digital Board (ODB)** is a revolutionary step to boost quality education in the country – Shri Prakash Javadekar
- **The Minister of Human Resource Development, Shri Prakash Javadekar** launched Operation Digital Board to leverage technology in order to boost quality education in the country. Addressing a press conference in New Delhi today, the Minister of Human Resource Development said that Operation Digital Board is a revolutionary step which will make the learning as well as the teaching process interactive and popularize flipped learning as a pedagogical approach.
- **Shri Prakash Javadekar** disclosed that the digital board will be introduced all over the country in government and government aided schools from class 9th onwards as well as in higher education institutions. The process will begin from the coming session of 2019 itself, the Minister explained.
- **He further said** that ODB aims at converting a class room into a digital class room and in addition to availability of e-resources at any time and at any place to students, it will also help in provisioning of personalised adaptive learning as well as Intelligent Tutoring by exploiting emerging technologies like Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence & Data Analytics. An expert committee has worked out optimum configuration of the Digital Class Rooms under ODB.
- **The Union Minister said** that the biggest challenge facing education sector in the country is maintaining acceptable quality standards across the country. Although we have good number of premier institutions, which compete with the best in the world, a large number of higher education institutions and schools needs improvements in quality teaching-learning, as the students coming out of these institutions find themselves unsuitable for the requirements of the society

and market. The spread of educational technology and connectivity has given an opportunity to resolve this issue and aim at equity in educational standards.

- **Shri Javadekar** also stated that the launching of e-Pathshala, DIKSHA, NROER, NPTEL, e-pgpathshala SWAYAM and SWAYAM-Prabha DTH Channels etc. by MHRD have provided adequate content of high quality which can be taken to every classroom, and thereby facilitating blended learning and flip class learning. These pedagogical interventions can adequately raise the standards of teaching, irrespective of the location of the Schools and Colleges/Institutes. Such technology enabled learning can also inspire teachers across the country to raise their own standards of teaching.

Implementation in Higher Education Institutions(HEIs)

- **UGC will** be the implementing agency for ODB in HEIs. UGC in its Commission meeting held on 29th Jan 2019, has passed a resolution for extending digital education to every classroom in the country by 2022. It is estimated that there would be 5 lakh classrooms in the institutions which are aided by Centre or State Governments. Out of this, based on the readiness, UGC proposed to take up 300 universities and about 10,000 colleges in the first phase covering 2 lakh classrooms.
- **Such Institutions** with readiness to implement would be preferred. For this purpose, UGC will put in place a Portal for all the public funded HEIs to log-in and opt for the scheme giving details of this facility.
- **For the 2 lakh class rooms**, the cost is estimated at Rs. 2000 crores. This can be implemented as a Central scheme, as a loan from HEFA.

Guru Ravidas

- **About Guru Ravidas:** Guru Ravidas was a North Indian mystic poet of the bhakti movement. While the exact year of his birth is not known, it is believed that the saint was born in 1377 C.E.
- **Guru Ravidas Jayanti** is celebrated on Magh Purnima, which is the full moon day in the Hindu calendar month of Magha. The Adi Granth of Sikhs, in addition to the Panchvani are the two of the oldest documented sources of the literary works of Guru Ravidas.
- **Notably, he belonged** to an untouchable caste and suffered a lot of atrocities as a result. However, the saint chose to focus on spiritual pursuits and also penned several devotional songs which made a huge impact in the Bhakti movement during the 14th to 16th century CE.
- **Guru Ravidas Teachings:** Guru Ravidas spoke against the caste divisions and spoke of removing them to promote unity. His teachings resonated with the people, leading to a religion being born called the Ravidassia religion, or Ravidassia Dharam based on his teachings.
- **He taught** about the omnipresence of God and said that a human soul is a particle of God and hence Ravidas rejected the idea that people considered lower caste cannot meet God. He said in his teachings that the only way to meet God was to free the mind from the duality.

Company under Department of Space

- **The following areas/avenues provide opportunities for commercial exploitation of ISRO programmes:** Small satellite technology transfer to industry, wherein the new company shall take license from DoS/ISRO and sub-license to industries; Manufacture of small satellite launch vehicle (SLV) in collaboration with the Private Sector;
- **Productionisation** of Polar SLV through industry; Productionisation and marketing of Space-based products and services, including launch and applications;
- **Transfer of Technology** developed by ISRO Centers and constituent units of DoS; Marketing of some spin-off technologies and products, both in India and abroad; and Any other subject which Government of India deems fit.

- **Significance:** The cabinet decision will definitely encourage the private sector to indulge more in production of launchers and satellites. In recent years, ISRO has been engaging the private sector in the manufacturing of satellite launchers so that it can focus more on R&D work.

Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019

- **Background:** The lower House, or the Lok Sabha, had passed the Bill on the last day of the budget session by a voice-vote, but could not get the approval of the Rajya Sabha.
- **Significance and impact:** The proposed Ordinance will immediately tackle the menace of illicit deposit-taking activities in the country launched by rapacious operators, which at present are exploiting regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings, an official statement said.
- **It will altogether** ban unregulated deposit taking schemes, and the law has adequate provisions for punishment and disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally.
- **Key provisions of the Bill:** Substantive banning clause which bans Deposit Takers from promoting, operating, issuing advertisements or accepting deposits in any Unregulated Deposit Scheme.
- **Creation of three** different types of offences, namely, running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes, fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes.
- **Severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines to act as deterrent.** Provisions for disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally. Attachment of properties / assets by the Competent Authority, and subsequent realization of assets for repayment to depositors.
- **Clear-cut time** lines have been provided for attachment of property and restitution to depositors. Creation of an online central database, for collection and sharing of information on deposit-taking activities in the country.
- **The Bill defines “Deposit Taker” and “Deposit” comprehensively:** “Deposit Takers” include all possible entities (including individuals) receiving or soliciting deposits, except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation.
- **“Deposit”** is defined in such a manner that deposit-takers are restricted from camouflaging public deposits as receipts, and at the same time, not to curb or hinder acceptance of money by an establishment in the ordinary course of its business.
- **Why do we need a comprehensive law on this?** To deal with the menace of illicit deposit taking schemes, as in the recent past, there have been rising instances of people in various parts of the country being defrauded by illicit deposit taking schemes.
- **The worst victims** of these schemes are the poor and the financially illiterate, and the operations of such schemes are often spread over many States.

National Policy on Electronics 2019

- **The Policy envisions** positioning India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing – (ESDM) by encouraging and driving capabilities in the country for developing core components, including chipsets, and creating an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally.
- **Salient Features of NPE 2019:** Create eco-system for globally competitive ESDM sector: Promoting domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM. Provide incentives and support for manufacturing of core electronic components. Provide special package of incentives for mega projects which are extremely high-tech and entail huge investments, such as semiconductor facilities display fabrication, etc.
- **Formulate** suitable schemes and incentive mechanisms to encourage new units and expansion of existing units.
- **Promote Industry-led** R&D and innovation in all sub-sectors of electronics, including grass root level innovations and early stage Start-ups in emerging technology areas such as 5G, IoT/ Sensors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Virtual Reality (VR), Drones, Robotics, Additive Manufacturing, Photonics, Nano-based devices, etc.

- **Provide incentives** and support for significantly enhancing availability of skilled manpower, including re-skilling. Special thrust on Fabless Chip Design Industry, Medical Electronic Devices Industry, Automotive Electronics Industry and Power Electronics for Mobility and Strategic Electronics Industry.
- **Create Sovereign Patent Fund (SPF)** to promote the development and acquisition of IPs in ESDM sector. Promote trusted electronics value chain initiatives to improve national cyber security profile.
- **Major Impact:** The NPE 2019 when implemented will lead to formulation of several schemes, initiatives, projects, etc., in consultation with the concerned Ministries/ Departments, for the development of ESDM sector in the country. It will enable flow of investment and technology, leading to higher value addition in the domestically manufactured electronic products, increased electronics hardware manufacturing in the country and their export, while generating substantial employment opportunities.

Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage), Second Ordinance, 2019

- **Benefits:** The proposed Ordinance will protect the rights of married Muslim women and prevent divorce by the practice of instantaneous and irrevocable 'talaq-e-biddat' by their husbands.
- **Promulgation** of the proposed Ordinance will provide the rights of subsistence allowance, custody of minor children to victims of triple talaq i.e. talaq-e-biddat.
- **Key provisions of the Bill:** The Bill makes all declaration of talaq, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal.
- **Definition:** It defines talaq as talaq-e-biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce. Talaq-e-biddat refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.
- **Offence and penalty:** The Bill makes declaration of talaq a cognizable offence, attracting up to three years' imprisonment with a fine. (A cognizable offence is one for which a police officer may arrest an accused person without warrant.) The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by: (i) the married woman (against whom talaq has been declared), or (ii) any person related to her by blood or marriage.
- **The Bill provides** that the Magistrate may grant bail to the accused. The bail may be granted only after hearing the woman (against whom talaq has been pronounced), and if the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.
- **The offence may** be compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding of the offence will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Allowance:** A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children. The amount of the allowance will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Custody:** A Muslim woman against whom such talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children. The manner of custody will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Significance:** Time has come to put an end to the suffering of Muslim women who have been at the receiving end of instant talaq for several years. More than 20 Islamic countries have already banned the practice.

Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities

- **Who are they?** Amongst the most disadvantaged communities in the country are the Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DNCs). These communities are hard to reach, less visible, and therefore frequently left out. While most DNTs are spread across the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST or OBC categories.
- **Need for protection:** Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities are considered to be the most deprived sections of Indian society. The nomadic and semi-nomadic communities move from place to place in search of livelihood. As a result, they are frequently left out. Hence to address the issues related to these communities there is a need for special attention.

- **Challenges faced by them:** The Denotified Tribes are communities that were listed or notified as 'born criminal' by the British under a number of laws. The term, 'Denotified and Nomadic Tribes', can be traced to the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871.
- **The colonial government** notified nearly 200 tribal communities to be hereditary criminals, cementing their societal identity as outcasts and subjecting them to constant harassment by the administration.
- **Forest laws** that came into force from the mid-nineteenth century onwards deprived a large number of communities of their traditional rights of hunting and gathering. The new laws criminalised their very source of livelihood when it practiced.
- **When the forests** were cleared by the British for commercial use and forest communities asked to contribute to labour, some communities resisted and were declared 'criminal'.
- **The British** thought that communities had lost their legitimate means of livelihood, they must have been living by indulging in criminal activities due to arrival of road and railway networks. After India gained Independence, these tribes were 'de-notified' from the list of Criminal Tribes.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana- Gramin (PMAY-G)

- **About PMAY- G:** The erstwhile rural housing scheme Indira Awaas yojana (IAY) has been restructured into Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana –Gramin (PMAY-G) from 01.04.2016.
- **PMAY-G aims** at providing a pucca house, with basic amenities, to all houseless householder and those households living in kutcha and dilapidated house, by 2022.
- **Cost sharing:** The cost of unit assistance in this scheme is shared between Central and State Governments in the ratio 60:40 in plain areas and 90: 10 for North Eastern and Himalayan States.
- **The scheme** envisages training of Rural Masons with the objective of improving workmanship and quality of construction of houses while at the same time, increasing availability of skilled masons and enhancing employability of such masons.
- **Selection of beneficiaries** under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) is based on housing deprivation parameters of Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011, subject to 13 point exclusion criteria, followed by Gram Sabha verification.

India to participate in PISA 2021

- **Significance:** India's participation in PISA- 2021 would lead to recognition and acceptability of Indian students and prepare them for the global economy in the 21st century.
- **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.
- **Later, the HRD Ministry,** under the NDA-II government, revisited this decision in 2016 and the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) had set up a committee to review the matter and submitted its report in December 2016. The report recommended for participation in test in 2018. However, India missed the application deadline for the 2018 cycle.
- **About the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA):** It 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.

National Rural Economic Transformation Project

- **Benefits:** The technical assistance provided by NRETP and the higher level interventions facilitated by the project will enhance the livelihoods promotion and access to finance and scale-up initiatives on digital finance and livelihood interventions.
- **Salient features:** DAY-NRLM lays special emphasis on targeting the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable communities and their financial inclusion. Innovative projects will be undertaken under NRETP to pilot alternate channels of financial inclusion, creating value chains around rural products, introduce innovative models in livelihoods promotion and access to finance and scale-up initiatives on digital finance and livelihoods interventions.
- **Significance of DAY- NRLM:** DAY-NRLM provides for mutually beneficial working relationship and formal platforms for consultations between Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Community Based Organizations(CBOs). NRLM has also developed activity map to facilitate convergence in different areas of interventions where NRLM institutions and PRIs could work together which has been disseminated to all state Rural Livelihood Missions.

Rozgar Yukta Gaon (RYG)

- **What is it?** Rozgar Yukta Gaon (RYG) aims at introducing an 'Enterprise-led Business Model' in place of 'Subsidy-led model' through partnership among 3 stakeholders- KRDP-assisted Khadi Institution, Artisans and Business Partner.
- **It will be rolled out** in 50 Villages by providing 10,000 Charkhas, 2000 looms & 100 warping units to Khadi artisans, and would create direct employment for 250 Artisans per village. The total Capital Investment per village shall be Rs.72 Lakh as subsidy, and Rs.1.64 Crore in terms of Working Capital from the Business Partner.

Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Programme

- **Impact:** The Programmes will have substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO2 emission. Considering average energy generation of 1.5 million units per MW, it is expected that addition of 38 GW solar rooftop plants under Phase-II by year 2022 will result in CO2 emission reduction of about 45.6 tonnes per year.
- **The programme** has directed employment potential. Besides increasing self-employment the approval is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 9.39 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers.
- **What is rooftop solar?** Rooftop solar installations — as opposed to large-scale solar power generation plants — can be installed on the roofs of buildings. As such, they fall under two brackets: commercial and residential. This simply has to do with whether the solar panels are being installed on top of commercial buildings or residential complexes.
- **What are the benefits?** Rooftop solar provides companies and residential areas the option of an alternative source of electricity to that provided by the grid. While the main benefit of this is to the environment, since it reduces the dependence on fossil-fuel generated electricity, solar power can also augment the grid supply in places where it is erratic.
- **Rooftop solar** also has the great benefit of being able to provide electricity to those areas that are not yet connected to the grid — remote locations and areas where the terrain makes it difficult to set up power stations and lay power lines.
- **What is the potential for rooftop solar in India?** The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has pegged the market potential for rooftop solar at 124 GW. However, only 1,247 MW of capacity had been installed as of December 31, 2016. That is a little more than 3% of the target for 2022, and 1% of the potential.

- **Why is it not being adopted widely?** One of the major problems with rooftop solar — and what affects solar energy generation in general — is the variability in supply. Not only can the efficiency of the solar panels vary on any given day depending on how bright the sunlight is, but the solar panels also produce no electricity during the night. Arguably, night is when off-grid locations most need alternative sources of electricity.
- **Storage is one solution.** Storage technology for electricity, however, is still underdeveloped and storage solutions are expensive. Most residential customers will find the cost of installing both rooftop solar panels and storage facilities prohibitive. Residential areas also come with the associated issues of use restrictions of the roof — if the roof is being used for solar generation, then it cannot be used for anything else.
- **Another major reason** why rooftop solar is not becoming popular is that the current electricity tariff structure renders it an unviable option. Many states have adopted a net metering policy, which allows disaggregated power producers to sell excess electricity to the grid. However, the subsidised tariffs charged to residential customers undermine the economic viability of installing rooftop solar panels. The potential profit simply does not outweigh the costs.

Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan

- **The proposed scheme consists of three components:** Component-A: 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants.
- **Component-B:** Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.
- **Component-C:** Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.
- **All three components** combined, the scheme aims to add a solar capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022. The total central financial support provided under the scheme would be Rs. 34,422 crore.
- **Key facts:** Under Component A, Renewable power plants of capacity 500 KW to 2 MW will be setup by individual farmers/ cooperatives/panchayats /farmer producer organisations (FPO) on their barren or cultivable lands. The power generated will be purchased by the DISCOMs at Feed in tariffs determined by respective SERC. The scheme will open a stable and continuous source of income to the rural land owners.
- **Under Component C** of the scheme, individual farmers will be supported to solarise pumps of capacity up to 7.5 HP. The farmer will be able to use the generated energy to meet the irrigation needs and the excess available energy will be sold to DISCOM. This will help to create an avenue for extra income to the farmers, and for the States to meet their RPO targets.
- **For both Component-B** and Component-C, central financial assistance (CFA) of 30% of the benchmark cost or the tender cost, whichever is lower, will be provided. The State Government will give a subsidy of 30%; and the remaining 40% will be provided by the farmer. Bank finance may be made available for meeting 30% of the cost. The remaining 10% will be provided by the farmer. Higher CFA of 50% will be provided for North Eastern States, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Lakshadweep and A&N Islands.
- **Significance of the scheme:** The Scheme will have substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO2 emissions. All three components of the Scheme combined together are likely to result in saving of about 27 million tonnes of CO2 emission per annum. Further, Component-B of the Scheme on standalone solar pumps may result in saving of 1.2 billion liters of diesel per annum and associated savings in the foreign exchange due to reduction of import of crude oil.
- **The scheme** has direct employment potential. Besides increasing self-employment the proposal is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 6.31 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers.
- **Facts for Prelims:** SWAYATT: What is it? It is an initiative to promote Start-ups, Women and Youth Advantage Through eTransactions on Government e Marketplace (GeM). This will bring together the key stakeholders within the Indian entrepreneurial ecosystem to Government e-Marketplace, the national procurement portal.

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Shri K J Alphons chairs the 2nd Meeting of National Tourism Advisory Council (NTAC) at “Statue of Unity”, Kevadia, Gujarat

- **Shri K.J. Alphons**, Union Minister for Tourism chaired the 2nd meeting of the reconstituted National Tourism Advisory Council (NTAC) at ‘Statue of Unity’, Kevadia, Gujarat today. The NTAC acts as think tank of the Ministry of Tourism and advises the Government on various tourism related policy matters. The meeting was attended by senior officers of the Ministry of Tourism, UNWTO representative and various stakeholders of tourism, such as representatives from Central Ministries, Industry Associations of tourism, individual experts in the field of tourism, etc.
- **Addressing the meeting**, the Minister comprehensively outlined the achievements of the Ministry and also the recent initiatives taken by the Government towards development and promotion of tourism. Mentioning the excellent performance of the country globally in recent years, the Minister said India has climbed from 7th rank in 2017 to 3rd rank in 2018 in World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Power and Performance index which has an impact on our Civil Aviation sector.
- **‘Employing all sections of the society**, the Tourism sector alone has created nearly 14 million jobs in the country in the last four years’, said Shri K. J. Alphons. The minister expressed his hope that India will achieve a better growth with the Country’s incredible tourism potential and the impeccable hospitality and the fast developing infrastructure and connectivity.
- **Thanking all the participants** for an effective brainstorming session, Shri Yogendra Tripathi, the Tourism Secretary said that Ministry acts as an enabler and shall take forward all the suggestions and recommendations. The Secretary also added that very specific tourism infrastructure development has been carried out by the Ministry through its two flagship schemes, Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD under which 77 projects amounting to Rs. 6121.69 crore and 27 projects worth Rs 832.35 crore have been sanctioned respectively.
- **The second session of the NTAC** included the Gujarat Tourism officials wherein the focus of discussion was Tourist inflow to the Statue of Unity and how to achieve a tourist footfall of 5 million per year. During the session, the host State of Gujarat made a presentation explaining the proposed initiatives to be taken by it on the matter. The NTAC meeting was preceded by a visit by the stakeholder representatives to the ‘Statue of Unity’ so as to enable them to effectively discuss the steps needed to enhance tourist footfall at the site.
- **The present NTAC was constituted on 27th October, 2016** under the chairmanship of Minister (Tourism) with tenure of 3 years. At present, there are 12 stakeholder Central Ministries besides Ministry of Tourism, 16 individual experts in the field of travel and tourism management and 7 Ex-officio members from industry associations as members of the Committee.

Operation Digital Board

- **About Operation Digital Board:** ODB aims at converting a class room into a digital class room and provide e-resources at any time and at any place to students.
- **The digital board** will be introduced all over the country in government and government aided schools from class 9th onwards as well as in higher education institutions.
- **The Operation Digital Board (ODB)** will be implemented in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- **Significance and benefits:** Operation Digital Board is a revolutionary step which will make the learning as well as the teaching process interactive and popularize flipped learning as a pedagogical approach.
- **It will also help** in provisioning of personalised adaptive learning as well as Intelligent Tutoring by exploiting emerging technologies like Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence & Data Analytics.

- **Need for such initiatives:** The biggest challenge facing education sector in the country is maintaining acceptable quality standards across the country. Although we have good number of premier institutions, which compete with the best in the world, a large number of higher education institutions and schools needs improvements in quality teaching-learning, as the students coming out of these institutions find themselves unsuitable for the requirements of the society and market.
- **The spread** of educational technology and connectivity has given an opportunity to resolve this issue and aim at equity in educational standards.

Sikaria Mega Food Park

- **About Mega Food Parks scheme:** Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing Mega Food Park Scheme in the country.
- **The Scheme of Mega Food Park** aims at providing a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers so as to ensure maximizing value addition, minimizing wastages, increasing farmers' income and creating employment opportunities particularly in rural sector.
- **These food parks give a major boost** to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with particular focus on perishables.
- **Funding: A maximum grant** of Rs 50 crore is given for setting up a MFP, in minimum 50 acres of contiguous land with only 50% contribution to the total project cost.
- **Mode of operation:** The Scheme has a cluster based approach based on a hub and spokes model. It includes creation of infrastructure for primary processing and storage near the farm in the form of Primary Processing Centres (PPCs) and Collection Centres (CCs) and common facilities and enabling infrastructure at Central Processing Centre (CPC).
- **The PPCs are meant** for functioning as a link between the producers and processors for supply of raw material to the Central Processing Centres. CPC has need based core processing facilities and basic enabling infrastructure to be used by the food processing units setup at the CPC. The minimum area required for a CPC is 50 acres.
- **The scheme is demand-driven** and would facilitate food processing units to meet environmental, safety and social standards.

States' ranking on Startup initiatives

- **Startup Ranking framework:** The Startup Ranking framework aims to rank the States/UTs for establishing a robust ecosystem for supporting Startups. The framework also encourages States and UTs to identify, learn and replicate good practices from each other.
- **The 2019 edition:** The Ranking Framework 2019 comprises of 7 pillars and 30 action points. The pillars will assess States'/UTs efforts across institutional support, simplifying regulations, easing public procurement, incubation support, seed funding support, venture funding support and awareness and outreach related activities.
- **The ranking exercise** aims to evaluate measures taken by States/UTs during the assessment period from May 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.
- **Significance of Startups:** India is home to about 20,000 startups, with about 1,400 beginning operations every year. They are not only driving economic growth but also leading to technological innovations and employment generation in every state. Entrepreneurs are introducing new solutions everyday and also improving existing processes.
- **To encourage and help startups** the Govt of India has taken the lead in creating policies and a framework. Many States and UTs have a startup focussed environment with ease of doing business for startups.
- **Way ahead:** The Govt has to align its strategies to tap into the infinite potential of young entrepreneurial minds. Startups need help in the journey from idea to business and business to success. States will also have to take proactive steps to enable startup ecosystems at the local level.

Govt approves capital infusion in 12 PSBs

- **Background:** The latest round of capital infusion is aimed at equipping better-performing PSBs under prompt corrective action (PCA) framework of RBI to be above regulatory PCA triggers such as CET-1 ratio of 7.375%, Tier I ratio of 8.875%, CRAR of 10.875% and NNPA below 6%.
- **With the latest funding,** the total amount of capital infusion would increase to Rs 100958 crore of the planned recapitalization of Rs 1.06 lakh crore for PSBs in FY2019.
- **Concerns associated with frequent capital infusions:** The government as the major owner is free to recapitalise but the issue is, at what cost, for how long, and whether recapitalisation alone is enough. The government is finding it increasingly difficult to recapitalize public sector banks due to the compulsion to adhere to the stringent budgetary deficit benchmarks.
- **Bankers become lackadaisical** toward debt recovery and tend to escalate provisions and contingencies to be adjusted against the fresh capital. In different-banks-same-pay situations, employees in the loss-making, but recapitalized, banks become unenthusiastic while those in profit-making, but not recapitalized are demotivated. It also implies cross-subsidization: dividend-paying PSU banks subsidizing the non-dividend paying. Ultimately, systemic efficiency suffers.
- **Way ahead:** PSBs are in very real danger of losing not only their market share but also their identity unless the government intervenes with surgical precision and alacrity. Hence, policymakers and bankers need to put their heads together and come up with a smart option to resolve an issue that can no longer be put on the backburner.

Military Space Force

- **Accordingly,** the Pentagon will establish the Space Force as the sixth branch of the United States military, to go along with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. However, the challenge ahead is that the Congress must approve the creation of any new military branch.
- **About US Military Space Force:** The main goal of the Space Force is to secure and extend American dominance of the space domain.
- **The Space Force** would initially reside within the Department of the Air Force, much as the Marine Corps is part of the U.S. Navy. S. Space Force will organize, train, and equip military space forces. Eventually, the aim is to push the Space Force out from under the Air Force's wings and make it a stand-alone organization.
- **Why it is not a "good idea"?** Another military arm would only compound the organisational challenges facing the U.S. armed services. It could undercut ongoing missions. It could very well increase budgetary allocations in the future. A space corps could undermine American efforts in the domain of joint warfare.
- **Why it may not be feasible to have a space force?** The fundamental difficulty of a space corps is that the physical environment of space is not conducive to the conduct of military operations without incurring serious losses in the form of spacecraft and debris. And despite efforts to make spacecraft more fuel efficient, the energy requirements are enormous.
- **The technical demands** of defending assets in space make the possibility of dominance and space as a domain for war-fighting a sort of chimera.
- **Challenges ahead:** A new space force is not merely a brand new service; it potentially increases greater organisational uncertainty within the U.S. military. Notwithstanding these concerns, Washington's headlong rush is the by-product of a strong commitment to preserving American advantages in space.
- **Why space has become so important?** Space is a "war-fighting domain" and global powers like Russia and China are already treating it as such.
- **Besides,** the stakes are high. Much of our 21st-century economy and lifestyle — from bank transactions to weather forecasting to television service to the GPS directions — depends on satellites functioning round the clock and without interruption. The military depends on them too.
- **In 2007, China** shot down one of its own satellites — mission accomplished in its own right, it also littered orbit with potentially destructive space debris. Many saw the operation as a veiled display of military power.
- **Facts for Prelims:** As its name suggests, SPD-4 is President Trump's fourth space policy directive. The first SPD directed NASA to get humans back to the moon as a stepping-stone to Mars. The second streamlined regulations for the commercial space sector, and the third dealt with management of space traffic.

Norms relaxed for Start-ups

- **The new norms** aim to catalyse entrepreneurship by enabling angel investments by innovators across all sections of society and all sectors of economy.
- **The changes brought in are:** The investment limit of angel investors to seek exemption under the Income Tax Act, 1961 has been increased to Rs 25 crore from 10 Crore.
- **An entity** shall be considered a start-up up to 10 years from its date of incorporation/registration instead of the previous period of 7 years. An entity would be considered as a startup up to a turnover of Rs 100 crore as against the earlier limit of Rs 25 crore.
- **Exemptions Proposed:** A start-up cannot invest in a building or land unless it is for its business or used by it for purposes of renting or held by it as stock-in-trade. A start-up cannot offer loans or advances, other than those where lending money is part of its business.
- **A start-up** cannot make any capital contribution to any other entity or invest in shares, car, any vehicle or mode of transport that costs more than Rs 10 lakh.

US National Emergency

- **The president** has argued that the emergency declaration is warranted because the migrants “invading” the United States across the Mexico border have caused epidemics of crime and drug use. , including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.
- **What is a national emergency?** In 1976, Congress passed the National Emergencies Act, which permits the president to pronounce a national emergency when he considers it appropriate. The act offers no specific definition of “emergency” and allows a president to declare one entirely at his or her discretion. , including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.
- **By declaring** a national emergency, the president avails himself or herself of dozens of specialized laws. Some of these powers have funds the president otherwise could not access. , including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.
- **Under current law**, emergency powers lapse within a year unless the president renews them. A national emergency can be re-declared indefinitely, and, in practice, that is done frequently. There have been 58 pronounced under the National Emergencies Act, of which 31 are still in effect. , including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.
- **What happens once a national emergency is declared?** Even though there aren't many limits on a president's ability to declare an emergency, it does not create complete freedom to act. Anyone directly affected by the order can challenge it in court. , including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.
- **Congress** can also draft a concurrent resolution to terminate the state of emergency, leading to a somewhat novel act. Ordinarily, congressional resolutions support a president's declaration of a national emergency.

LOFAR telescope

- **The discovery** literally shed new light on some of the Universe's deepest secrets, including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.
- **About LOFAR Telescope:** The Low-Frequency Array or LOFAR, is a large radio telescope network located mainly in the Netherlands, completed in 2012 by ASTRON, the Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy and its international partners.
- **How it works?** LOFAR consists of a vast array of omnidirectional antennas using a new concept in which the signals from the separate antennas are not combined in real time as they are in most array antennas. The electronic signals from the antennas are digitized, transported to a central digital processor, and combined in software to emulate a conventional antenna.

- **The project** is based on an interferometric array of radio telescopes using about 20,000 small antennas concentrated in at least 48 stations.
- **The mission of LOFAR** is to map the Universe at radio frequencies from ~10–240 MHz with greater resolution and greater sensitivity than previous surveys, such as the 7C and 8C surveys, and surveys by the Very Large Array (VLA) and Giant Meterwave Radio Telescope (GMRT).

VIVID- 2019:

- **Context:** VIVID-Vision Insight and Voices as India goes Digital"- the District Informatics Officer (DIO) meet, is being organised by National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- **What is it?** The meet is held as an initiative to interact with the DIO's and to share their experiences as well as contribution, as digital change-makers at the grass-root level in the States.
- **VIVID started in 2017**, as an annual event, with the objective to empower NIC officials in the field of technology.
- **The National meet** will cover a wide range of relevant topics in various technical sessions including Emerging Technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning & Big Data Analytics), Cyber Threats & Counter Measures (Changing Digitisation Paradigm & its impact on Security), Enterprise Level Applications, and many other relevant topics.

Agricultural Science Congress:

- **Context:** 14th Agricultural Science Congress is being held at New Delhi.
- **Organized by:** The NAAS in collaboration with the ICAR and Indian Agricultural Research Institute.
- **Theme:** "Innovations for Agricultural Transformation".

Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS):

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet approved construction of Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Corridor of Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) covering a distance of 82.15 kms.
- **The RRTS** is a first-of-its-kind, rail-based, high-speed regional transit system to be implemented in India.
- **Once operational**, it will be the fastest, most comfortable and safest mode of commuter transport in the National Capital Region (NCR). The RRTS aims to streamline the urban transportation system, which is stressed due to intensive developments, and increase in the number of private vehicles.
- **The project** is meant to ensure 'Universal Access' by being sensitive to the needs of women, children and vulnerable sections of the society.

About the Island Development Agency (IDA):

- **What is it?** The IDA was set up on June 1 this year following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's review meeting for the development of islands. The meetings of the agency are chaired by the Union Home Minister.
- **Composition:** Members of the IDA include cabinet secretary, home secretary, secretary (environment, forests and climate change), secretary (tourism) and secretary (tribal welfare).

RBI's payouts to the govt — why, and how much:

- **Summary:** The section discusses about dividends paid by RBI to govt, rationale and provisions associated, concerns associated and significance of such payouts.
- **Context:** This is the second year running that the RBI has paid an interim dividend to the government; it had approved an interim payout of Rs 10,000 crore last year.
- **How does a central bank like the RBI generate profits (or surplus)?** RBI earns largely from the returns on its foreign currency assets, which could be in the form of bonds and treasury bills of other central banks or top-rated securities, deposits with other central banks, the interest it earns on its holdings of local rupee-denominated government bonds or securities; when lending to banks for very short tenures (such as overnight); and management commission on handling the borrowings of state governments and the central government. The RBI buys these financial assets against its fixed liabilities such as currency held by the public, and deposits issued to commercial banks on which it does not pay interest.
- **RBI's expenditure** is mainly on the printing of currency notes and on staff; on commissions to banks for undertaking transactions on behalf of the government across the country, and to primary dealers, including banks, for underwriting some of these borrowings.
- **The central bank's** total costs, including expenditure on printing and commissions, is only about a seventh of its total net interest income — which implies that it generates a large surplus.
- **Does the government have a claim on the RBI's profits/surplus?** Government of India is the sole owner of the RBI. Therefore, the government can make a legitimate claim to surplus generated by RBI.
- **RBI transfers its "surplus"** — the excess of income over expenditure — to the government under the provisions Section 47 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934: "After making provision for bad and doubtful debts, depreciation in assets, contributions to staff and superannuation funds and for all other matters for which provision is to be made by or under this Act or which are usually provided for by bankers, the balance of the profits shall be paid to the Central Government."
- **Is there a problem in giving extra dividends?** Much of the surplus that the RBI generates comes from the interest on government assets, or from the capital gains it makes off other market participants. When this is paid to the government as dividend, the RBI is putting back into the system the money it has made from it — and there is no additional money-printing or reserve-creation involved. But when the RBI pays an additional dividend to the government, it has to create additional permanent reserves — that is, it has to print money. To accommodate the special dividend, the RBI would have to withdraw an equivalent amount of money from the public by selling government bonds in its portfolio.
- **Why are central banks reluctant to transfer large amounts to the sovereign?** Large payouts can limit their ability to create buffers that would cushion the impact of a crisis.
- **What is the global practice on payment of surplus by central banks?** Almost all central banks, the US Federal Reserve, the Bank of England, Germany's Bundesbank, or the Reserve Bank of Australia, are owned by their respective governments, and have to transfer their surplus or profits to the Treasury, or the equivalent of India's Finance Ministry.
- **The UK has** a formal Memorandum of Understanding on the financial relationship between the Treasury and the Bank of England, which lays down a clear framework for passing on 100% of net profits to the government. The US Fed too, transfers all its net earnings to the Treasury.

UPSC = Fever



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On many occasions, the highest law-making body was reduced to a formality Chakshu Roy, The Print, Feb 13, 2019

- **After three decades**, the 16th Lok Sabha witnessed a government with a single party majority. The majority was expected to enable smooth functioning of Parliament and passage of legislation. In the last five years, the government was able to pass 133 bills. Key bills piloted by the finance and social justice ministries were approved by Parliament.
- **These included bills** like GST, insolvency and bankruptcy code, Aadhaar, increase in maternity benefit for women, reservation for the economically weaker section and constitutional status for the OBC Commission. However, it was not smooth sailing for the government's legislative agenda. The opposition either successfully blocked or delayed many government bills.
- **Marque government** legislations like land acquisition amendment, triple talaq, and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill were blocked and will now lapse at the end of this Lok Sabha. This was because of governments' lack of numbers in the Rajya Sabha.
- **Opposition parties forced** referral of some bills to select committees of the Upper House before agreeing to pass them. But a number of bills were fast-tracked through Parliament without referring them to a parliamentary committee.
- **In this Lok Sabha**, 70 per cent of the bills did not go through the scrutiny of parliamentary committees.
- **On important issues like GST**, the government had to build consensus before Parliament approval could be secured. But this spirit of building consensus was missing on many issues over the last five years. This reflected in parliamentary proceedings getting adjourned and on occasions, the highest law-making body was reduced to a formality.

Government committed to Farmers welfare

- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)** being launched for augmenting the income of farmers by providing income support to small and marginal farmer families
- **Vulnerable landholding** farmers having cultivable land upto 2 hectares to be provided direct income support of Rs. 6000 per year
- **To provide an assured** income support to the small and marginal farmers, the Government is launching the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN). Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year. This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each. This programme will be funded by Government of India. Around 12 crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit from this. It will entail an annual expenditure of Rs. 75,000 crore. PM-KISAN would not only provide assured supplemental income to the most vulnerable farmer families, but would also meet their emergent needs especially before the harvest season. PM-KISAN would pave the way for the farmers to earn and live a respectable living.
- **A small and marginal** landholder farmer family for the purpose of the calculation of the benefit is defined as "a family comprising of husband, wife and minor children (upto 18 years of age) who collectively own cultivable land upto 2 hectare as per land records of the concerned State/UT".
- **The existing land-ownership system** in the concerned States/UTs will be used for identification of beneficiaries. Those whose names appear in land records as on 01.02.2019 are eligible for benefit. If a Landholder Farmer Family (LFF) has land parcels spread across different village/revenue records, then land will be pooled for determining the benefit. Accordingly, it is of utmost importance that the land records are clear and updated and the State/UT Governments are requested to complete updation of and records for the purpose expeditiously. All States/UTs shall endeavor to complete the identification of beneficiaries and facilitate quick distribution of the benefit to farmers.

- **The benefit shall be transferred** by Government of India to the bank account of the beneficiaries through State Notional Account. For transfer of benefit, District-wise beneficiaries lists shall be certified and uploaded by the States/UTs on the PM-KISAN Portal of Govt. of India and the funds will be electronically transferred to the beneficiary's bank account by Gol through State Notional Account on a pattern similar to MNREGS. The funds pertaining to income support benefit shall be released from Gol periodically based on receipt of fund transfer order through the concerned State/UT Govt. with the eligible beneficiaries' details. States shall also notify District Level Grievance Redressal Committees for redressing all grievances related to implementation of the scheme.
- **Secretary**, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Shri Sanjay Agarwal has requested State/UT Govts to immediately initiate the work of identification of beneficiaries and uploading the relevant data for release of funds by Govt. of India in the bank accounts of eligible farmer families. He has requested the Chief Secretaries to personally monitor the progress of implementation and do periodic reviews at their level for effective implementation.

Shisht Bharat Campaign

- **What is it?** The Shisht Bharat campaign, launched by a NGO, aims to strengthen the moral character of Indian citizens by sensitizing them about values of morality, civic sense, politeness, decorum and dignity.
- **Launched initially** in Delhi NCR, the campaign brings together policy-makers, media personalities, parents, RWAs, Delhi traffic police, NGOs, corporate houses and multinationals together for the promotion of the cause.
- **The revolutionary campaign will execute under three pillars:** Educate the masses by engaging with schoolchildren, parents, youth, media persons, ordinary citizens and advocacy with policy makers.
- **Reach** out to community members by engaging with RWAs, market clusters, clubs, associations and other relevant stakeholders. Inspire action through novel and encouraging methods like social media, competitions and awards, among others.

Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG)

- **The Atmospheric Water Generator** is being manufactured by BEL in collaboration with CSIR-IICT and MAITHRI, a start-up company based in Hyderabad.
- **How it works?** BEL's Atmospheric Water Generator employs a novel technology to extract water from the humidity present in the atmosphere and purify it. It uses heat exchange for condensing the atmospheric moisture to produce pure, safe and clean potable water.
- **The AWG comes** with a Mineralisation Unit, which is used to add minerals which are required to make the water potable. The AWG is configurable in static and mobile (vehicular) versions and is available in 30 litres/day, 100 litres/day, 500 litres/day and 1,000 litres/day capacities.
- **Significance and benefits:** The Atmospheric Water Generator can be used to provide drinking water in community centres and public places like health care centres, schools, colleges, offices, railway stations, bus stands, airports, sea ports, off-shore oil rigs, military establishments, remote field areas and remote establishments and residential complexes.

HOPE Portal

- **The revamped** certification process is driven through a new portal called HOPE – Healthcare Organizations' Platform for Entry-Level-Certification.
- **About HOPE Portal:** It is an online platform for smooth and secure registration which provides a self-explanatory questionnaire to be filled by the HCO/SHCOs. It ensures quality at nascent stages by enrolling a wide range of hospitals across the country including Healthcare Organizations (HCOs). HOPE also enables them to comply with quality protocols, improve patient safety and the overall healthcare facility of the organization.

Indus Water Treaty

- **The government's** decision will not impact Pakistan's share of water under the Indus Water Treaty between the two nations.
- **River sharing between India and Pakistan:** The sharing of water of the six rivers— Indus, Chenab, Jhelum, Beas, Ravi and Sutlej— between India and Pakistan is governed by a treaty the two countries signed in 1960. The deal was brokered by the World Bank after nine years of negotiation.
- **Under the treaty**, India has control over water flowing in the eastern rivers— Beas, Ravi and Sutlej. Pakistan has control over the western rivers— Indus, Chenab and Jhelum.
- **As per the treaty**, the water commissioners of Pakistan and India are required to meet twice a year and arrange technical visits to projects' sites and critical river head works. Both the sides share details of the water flow and the quantum of water being used under the treaty.
- **The treaty sets out** a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two countries regarding their use of the rivers.
- **Of the total** 168 million acre-feet, India's share of water from the three allotted rivers is 33 million acre-feet, which constitutes nearly 20 per cent. India uses nearly 93-94 per cent of its share under the Indus Waters Treaty. The rest of the water remains unutilised and goes to Pakistan.
- **Projects proposed to utilize the unutilised water:** After the Uri attack in 2016, India has fast-tracked water projects to arrest the unutilised water. The three projects include the Shahpur-Kandi dam project, a second Sutlej-Beas link in Punjab and the UJH Dam project in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Pakistan's water woes:** An IMF study said that Pakistan is the third most affected country in the world in terms of acute water shortage. Closing the taps is likely to send a strong message that Pakistan cannot continue to perpetrate terrorism from its soil with impunity.
- **Why it may not be feasible to stop water- flow altogether?** So far the treaty has survived wars and phases of frosty ties between India and Pakistan. India's any move affecting the treaty would be closely watched by the international community. India cannot abrogate the treaty on a short notice. It takes years to divert the flow of a river. The government of India will have to prepare a long-term strategy if it intends to threaten Pakistan by diverting or stopping the water.
- **Challenges and concerns:** The IWT has survived various wars and other hostilities between the two countries, and as such it is largely considered a success. Today, however, the treaty is increasingly faced with challenges it wasn't designed to deal with.
- **For instance**, India recently fast-tracked approval for several major dams along the Chenab, a 900km-long tributary of the Indus that was originally allotted to Pakistan under the IWT. This follows several other contentious dams already being built on shared rivers including Kishanganga, on the Jhelum River, which was also allotted to Pakistan.
- **Under the IWT**, India does indeed have a right to "limited hydropower generation" upstream on the western tributaries allotted to Pakistan, including the Chenab and the Jhelum. However, many in Pakistan worry that even though these proposed dams may individually abide by the technical letter of the treaty, their effects will add up downstream.
- **Because the treaty** does not provide a definitive solution, the two countries have frequently sought time-consuming and expensive international arbitration. From time to time, Pakistan has raised concerns and asked for intervention on the storage capacity of Indian dams planned on shared rivers allotted to Pakistan under the IWT.
- **Basin countries have** also not been forthcoming in sharing data and announcing planned hydropower projects ahead of time.

Jallianwala: Punjab Assembly seeks UK apology

- **The resolution** seeks to pay a befitting tribute to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre martyrs during the centenary year of the massacre.
- **About the incident:** April 13, 1919, marked a turning point in the Indian freedom struggle. It was Baisakhi that day, a harvest festival popular in Punjab and parts of north India. Local residents in Amritsar decided to hold a meeting that day to discuss and protest against the confinement of Satya Pal and Saifuddin Kitchlew, two leaders fighting for Independence, and implementation of the Rowlatt Act, which armed the British government with powers to detain any person without trial.

- **The crowd had** a mix of men, women and children. They all gathered in a park called the Jallianwala Bagh, walled on all sides but for a few small gates, against the orders of the British. The protest was a peaceful one, and the gathering included pilgrims visiting the Golden Temple who were merely passing through the park, and some who had not come to protest.
- **While the meeting** was on, Brigadier-General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer, who had crept up to the scene wanting to teach the public assembled a lesson, ordered 90 soldiers he had brought with him to the venue to open fire on the crowd. Many tried in vain to scale the walls to escape. Many jumped into the well located inside the park.
- **Outcomes:** Considered the 'The Butcher of Amritsar' in the aftermath of the massacre, General Dyer was removed from command and exiled to Britain.
- **Rabindranath** Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, as a sign of condemnation, renounced their British Knighthood and Kaiser-i-Hind medal respectively. In 1922, the infamous Rowlett Act that allowed internment of suspects without trial was repealed by the British.

Green India Mission

- **Concerns highlighted by the report:** Underfunded: The scheme is proposed for 10 years with an outlay of Rs 60,000 crore. During 2017-18, Rs 47.8 crore has been allocated for the scheme which is grossly insufficient as the committed liability for 2015-16 and 2016-17 is Rs 89.53 crore which is much more than the budget allocated.
- **Concerns over INDC targets:** The panel also raises concerns about the targets set by GIM on India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. According to the NDC, India has a target to sequester 2.523 billion tonnes of carbon by 2020-30. Our current forest cover is 75 million hectare and to meet our target of carbon sequestration, 30 million hectares of additional land would be required for forests. The mission document does not mention from where will this land be arranged.
- **The report also found** that in 2015-16 and 2016-17, the GIM missed its targets by 34%. Instead of the targeted 67,956 hectares, only 44,749 hectares of land got green cover.
- **The committee also points** out that the afforestation done under the mission was only aimed at increasing tree count without considering the soil and weather conditions. Trees like eucalyptus were planted which make environmental problems worse rather than solving it. Planting of unsuitable trees may cause drought, and prevent biodiversity in the regions.
- **About Green India Mission:** GIM is one of the eight missions launched under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
- **GIM's launch** was supposed to coincide with the starting of the 12th five-year plan in 2012. But, owing to financial delays the mission was finally launched in 2015.
- **The objective of the mission** is to increase green cover to the extent of 5 million hectares (mha) and improve quality of existing green cover on another 5 mha, improve eco-system services like carbon sequestration, hydrological services and biodiversity and provisioning services like fuel, fodder, and timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). It also has to increase forest-based livelihood income for about 3 million households.

Supreme Court orders eviction of 1.1 mn forest families

- **The court has directed** the Dehradun-based Forest Survey of India to submit a satellite-image based report on the encroachments removed.
- **What's the issue and what were the reasons for evacuation?** About 11,72,931 (1.17 million) land ownership claims made by scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected on various grounds, including absence of proof that the land was in their possession for at least three generations.
- **The law provides** for giving land rights to those living on forest land for at least three generations before December 31, 2005.
- **Criticisms:** The Forest Rights Law itself has been criticised by both wildlife activists and those fighting for the rights of tribespeople and forest-dwellers, albeit for different reasons. The former believe giving people rights to live in forests will eventually harm the forests themselves and also wildlife.
- **The latter believe** that the implementation of the law is far from perfect and that deficiencies in this have resulted in many valid claims being rejected by the states. The latter also allege that the government didn't exactly put up an effective defence in the case, which was brought by wildlife NGOs and activists.

- **About Forest Rights Act (FRA):** The act was passed in December 2006. It deals with the rights of forest-dwelling communities over land and other resources. The Act grants legal recognition to the rights of traditional forest dwelling communities, partially correcting the injustice caused by the forest laws.
- **Rights under the Act:** Title rights – Ownership to land that is being farmed by tribals or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of 4 hectares; ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family, meaning that no new lands are granted.
- **Use rights** – to minor forest produce (also including ownership), to grazing areas, to pastoralist routes, etc. Relief and development rights – to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection. Forest management rights – to protect forests and wildlife.
- **Eligibility:** Eligibility to get rights under the Act is confined to those who “primarily reside in forests” and who depend on forests and forest land for a livelihood. Further, either the claimant must be a member of the Scheduled Tribes scheduled in that area or must have been residing in the forest for 75 years.
- **Process of recognition of rights:** The Act provides that the gram sabha, or village assembly, will initially pass a resolution recommending whose rights to which resources should be recognised.
- **This resolution** is then screened and approved at the level of the sub-division (or taluka) and subsequently at the district level.
- **The screening committees** consist of three government officials (Forest, Revenue and Tribal Welfare departments) and three elected members of the local body at that level. These committees also hear appeals.

“Waste to Wonder” Park:

- **Context:** “Waste to Wonder” Park was recently inaugurated in South Delhi. The park sets an example of creation of ‘Wealth from waste’.
- **Drone Olympics Competition:** Context: First ever ‘Drone Olympics’ competition for UAV’s was held recently at Air Force Station, Bengaluru alongside the Aero India exhibition (Theme – ‘The Runway to a Billion Opportunities’)
- **It was organized by Ministry of Defence.** Aim: to encourage the UAV industry to connect with potential buyers and business partners in the country and also provide an opportunity to the Armed Forces to assess the capabilities of UAVs.
- **Significance of drones:** The role of drones is ever-increasing in the defence sectors, making them the ideal platform for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, electronic warfare and strike missions.

Bramble Cay melomys is first mammal to go extinct due to climate change:

- **Context:** Climate change induced by human beings has claimed its first victim in ‘Class Mammalia’ of the ‘Animal Kingdom’: the Bramble Cay melomys — a ‘little brown rat’ found in Australia.
- **The government of Australia’s** Queensland province reported the species to be extinct in June 2016. It was placed in the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List of Threatened Species.

Hippocamp- new Neptune moon:

- **Context:** With help from NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope, astronomers have confirmed the existence of Hippocamp- a tiny moon in orbit around Neptune.

- **With a diameter** of only 20 miles, the newly characterized moon — named after a mythical half-horse, half-fish sea creature — is the smallest moon yet discovered in orbit around the outermost planet.
- **The discovery** of Hippocamp brings to 14 the number of moons discovered in orbit around Neptune. There are seven inner moons, including Hippocamp, along with six outer moons and Neptune's largest moon, Triton.
- **Women Livelihood Bond:** Context: The World Bank, the Small Industries Development Bank (Sidbi) and the UN Women, along with 10 wealth management firms and leading corporates has announced the launch of Women Livelihood Bond- a new social impact bond to offer credit to rural women entrepreneurs.

Women Livelihood Bond:

- **The bonds**, which will have a tenure of five years, will be launched by SIDBI with the support of World Bank and UN Women.
- **The proposed bond** will enable individual women entrepreneurs in sectors like food processing, agriculture, services and small units to borrow around Rs 50,000 to Rs 3 lakh at an annual interest rate of around 13-14 per cent or less.
- **SIDBI will act** as the financial intermediary and channel funds raised to women entrepreneurs through participating financial intermediaries like banks, NBFCs or microfinance institutions.

Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha:

- **Context:** The President of India recently unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha in Chennai.
- **About Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha:** Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha was established in the year 1918 by Mahatma Gandhi with the sole aim of propagating Hindi in southern states. The first Pracharak was Devadoss Gandhi son of Mahatma Gandhi.

Half-measures: new angel tax rules for start-ups:

- **Context:** The Centre recently eased the norms under which investments in start-ups will be taxed by the government.
- **Recent changes:** Investments up to ₹25 crore in companies that are less than 10 years old and with a total turnover of less than ₹100 crore will be exempted from the new angel tax.
- **Investments made** by listed companies with a net worth of at least ₹100 crore or a total turnover of at least ₹250 crore will be fully exempt from the tax; so will investments made by non-resident Indians.
- **What necessitated this? Problems with the old ones:** In 2012, the angel tax was introduced and was justified as an emergency measure to prevent the laundering of illegal wealth by means of investments in the shares of unlisted private companies at extraordinary valuations. But the adverse effect that it has had on investor confidence has forced the government to ease the stringent rules.
- **Benefits of new rules:** The easing of the outdated angel tax rules will definitely make life easier for start-ups, which are in desperate need for capital to fund their growth and other business requirements.
- **Since the new rules** are set to be applied retrospectively, many young companies that have received notices from the Income Tax Department in the last few years will be relieved by the latest tweak in the rules.
- **There are, however**, a few other issues with the new rules that could still cause unnecessary headaches to young start-ups: Companies wishing to make use of the latest exemption, for instance, will first need to be registered with the government as start-ups.

- **To be classified as one**, a company needs to attest to conditions such as that it has not invested in any land unrelated to the business, vehicles worth over ₹10 lakh, or jewellery.
- **These requirements**, while probably aimed to prevent money- laundering, can lead to considerable bureaucratic delays and rent-seeking.
- **Also, the new rules** for the angel tax can cause the same old problem of arbitrary tax demands for companies that do not fall under the defined category of start-ups.
- **The taxes to be paid** are still supposed to be calculated by the authorities based on how much the sale price of a company's unlisted share exceeds its fair market value. It is impossible to know the market value, let alone the fair market value, of shares that are not openly traded in the marketplace.
- **So tax authorities** with ulterior motives will still possess enough leeway to harass start-ups with unreasonable tax demands.

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PM to launch PM-KISAN scheme from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh tomorrow

- **First instalment** of Rs 2,000 to selected small and marginal farmers to be transferred directly in their accounts
- **Around 12 crore small and marginal farmers to be benefitted** PM to unveil Several Development Projects in Gorakhpur Posted On: 23 FEB 2019 4:26PM by PIB Delhi The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, will visit Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh tomorrow on 24 February 2019. At Gorakhpur, Prime Minister will launch the PM-KISAN scheme.
- **At Fertilizer Corporation** of India ground in Gorakhpur, Prime Minister will mark the launch of the PM-KISAN scheme, through press of button, to electronically transfer the first instalment of Rs 2,000 to selected farmers. This will mark the official launch of the PM KISAN scheme. PM will also distribute certificates to select farmers under PM-KISAN scheme. PM will also interact with select beneficiaries of PM-KISAN through video conference.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM KISAN)** The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) was announced in the interim Budget 2019-20 on February 1, 2019.
- **Under the Scheme**, Rs 6,000 will be given per year to small and marginal farmer families having combined land holding/ownership of upto 2 hectares. The amount will be given in three installments of Rs.2000 each.
- **The amount** will be transferred directly to the bank account of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer. DBT will ensure transparency in the entire process and will save time for the farmers.
- **The Scheme was introduced** to augment the income of the Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs). It is estimated to benefit more than 12 crore small and marginal farmers.
- **The PM-KISAN scheme** aims to supplement the financial needs of the SMFs in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with the anticipated farm income at the end of the each crop cycle. This would also protect them from falling in the clutches of moneylenders for meeting such expenses and ensure their continuance in the farming activities.
- **PM KISAN is a Central Sector scheme** with 100% funding from Government of India. The Scheme becomes effective from 1.12.2018 for transfer of benefit to eligible beneficiaries.
- **State Government** and UT Administration will identify the farmer families which are eligible for support as per scheme guidelines.
- **PM KISAN** is a revolutionary scheme which aims to transform the lives of small and marginal farmers in India, by providing them assured monetary support in three instalments every year. The scheme implemented through DBT, will transfer the amount directly to the bank account of the beneficiary, thereby eliminating middlemen and corruption. As against the onetime loan waivers, PM KISAN is truly an empowering project designed for ensuring dignified life for small scale farmers. In the long run, the scheme is expected to address farmer migration and improve crop intensity.

A referee less partisan Chakshu Roy, Indian Express, Feb 15, 2019

- **Earlier this month**, the Speaker of the Karnataka Vidhan Sabha was embroiled in a controversy. The chief minister alleged that the Speaker was offered a bribe of Rs 50 crore. He played a tape which purportedly contains a conversation referring to money being offered to the Speaker for accepting the resignation of 15 MLAs. These allegations triggered a fresh political slugfest as any change in the number of MLAs in the Vidhan Sabha will destabilise the coalition government in Karnataka. The larger question this incident raises is of increasing politicisation of the office of the Speaker of legislatures.

- **Speakers are central** to the functioning of a legislature. They are arbiters who steer proceedings in Parliament and state assemblies. They ensure that our legislative institutions fulfil their constitutional mandate of lawmaking, government accountability and representation. For Speakers to do their job effectively, insulation from political pressure is essential. The passing of the anti-defection law in 1985 gave Speakers the power to expel MLAs and MPs for anti-party activities, both inside and outside the legislature. This law single-handedly ensured that the Speaker, in addition to being a referee in legislative proceedings, also became an active player in the politics of government formation and survival.
- **Asoke Kumar Sen** was the Union law minister who piloted the anti-defection law through Parliament. He reasoned that giving Speakers the power to expel legislators would prevent unnecessary delays by courts, speed things up and give the law more teeth. Some MPs pointed out that this power would involve the Speaker in unnecessary controversies. However, Sen prevailed and the provision found its way into the Constitution. Perhaps he assumed that Speakers would remain immune to political pressures. It took less than three years for this assumption to be disproved.
- **After the death of Tamil Nadu** Chief Minister M G Ramachandran in 1987, the ensuing struggle for succession split the ruling AIADMK into two factions. His widow, V N Janaki, was sworn in as the CM. Thereafter, a confidence motion in her favour was moved in the assembly. During the voting, the party whip petitioned the Speaker asking for the disqualification of 27 MLAs from the opposing faction. The Speaker immediately disqualified these MLAs during voting in the House, which resulted in pandemonium.
- **The Speaker's** neutrality was questioned and aspersions cast on his decision. In 2017, Tamil Nadu faced a similar situation. The Speaker expelled certain MLAs for anti-party activities. The expelled MLAs, in their defence, alleged that the Speaker was acting with malice and bias. Another MLA described the Speaker's decision as a "murder of democracy".
- **Over the last three decades**, Speakers of Vidhan Sabhas have been criticised for decisions on the membership of MLAs under the anti-defection law and their rulings have been challenged in courts. Often, political pressure to give certain rulings, or not to act in certain cases, has led to the undermining of their constitutional office. There is an urgent need to protect the office of the Speaker from the ill effects of the anti-defection law. There is an easy and a hard way for this to be done.
- **The easy way is to either** limit or take away the Speaker's powers when it comes to expelling legislators. This could be done by restricting the Speaker to only act against those legislators who defy the party whip while voting on matters that impact government stability. Or as some expert bodies have proposed, the Speaker's powers in such cases can be given to the President/Governor, acting on the advice of the Election Commission.
- **The hard solution** is to get rid of the anti-defection law. It is a law which is systematically hollowing out our legislatures. It has failed in achieving its purpose of political stability. Its provisions have been circumvented and it has stifled voices of our elected legislators.

Super-Efficient Air Conditioning programme

- **Super-Efficient Air Conditioning Programme- key facts:** Under the programme, Super-Efficient Air Conditioners are distributed. They are 40% more efficient than, but priced comparably with, the 3-star ACs currently available in the market (ISEER 3.8). EESL is working towards making this programme and its benefits available to all consumers across the nation with the other DISCOMs likely to partner with EESL in future.
- **Significance and benefits of the programme:** Besides promoting energy efficiency, the Super-Efficient AC programme will also help to reduce the peak power demand in South and West Delhi by 22MW, enabling the two organisations to harness synergies to promote energy security and sustainability.
- **The programme** directly addresses the prospect of the nearly four-fold increase in energy consumption from buildings and cooling appliances in India by 2032, while also addressing goals of India's Cooling Action Plan and Hydrochlorofluorocarbon Phase Out Management Plan, enabling achievement of India's targets under the Kigali and Paris Agreements.
- **Funding:** EESL's investment in the programme is partially supported by a grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Further, Asian Development Bank (ADB) is providing necessary grant support and loan while United Nations Environment (UNEP) is providing technical assistance support to the Super-Efficient AC programme.
- **About GEF:** GEF is an independent financing mechanism that was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to address global environmental issues. The GEF is an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector.
- **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).

All India Citizens Survey of Police Services

- **Aim: The survey** is aimed to understand public perceptions about Police, gauge the level of non-reporting of crimes or incidents to Police, the position on ground relating to crime reporting & recording, timeliness and quality of police response and action, and to assess citizens' perception and experience about women and children's safety.
- **Significance:** The outcome of the survey is expected to bring out useful suggestions for stakeholders in formulating and implementing appropriate policy responses and changes in the functioning of police at the cutting edge and for improving crime prevention and investigation, transformation in community policing, improvement in the access to the justice and increased appropriate resource allocation for police in a systematic manner.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- **Background:** India wanted Pakistan to be put under "closer scrutiny immediately" and has demanded that "stronger implementation" be sought from Islamabad in curbing terror financing. India had even prepared a dossier for the watchdog nailing the culpability of Pakistan in the Pulwama terror strike, the worst such attack in J&K in decades.
- **Background:** Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the FATF in June for failing to curb anti-terror financing. It has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the Paris-based FATF, a measure that officials here fear could further hurt its economy.
- **Implications of this move:** Pakistani analysts say being put on the FATF watchlist could deal a blow to Pakistan's economy, making it harder for foreign investors and companies to do business in the country.
- **It would be** counterproductive to put Pakistan on the watch list as it would hurt its capability to fight terrorism. Also, being put back on the grey list would heighten Pakistan's risk profile and some financial institutions would be wary of transacting with Pakistani banks and counterparties.
- **Being placed** on the FATF watchlist carries no direct legal implications but brings extra scrutiny from regulators and financial institutions that can chill trade and investment and increase transaction costs.
- **About FATF:** What is it? The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7. It is a "policy-making body" which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.
- **Objectives:** The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- **Functions:** The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally. In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.
- **What is blacklist and grey list?** FATF maintains two different lists of countries: those that have deficiencies in their AML/CTF regimes, but they commit to an action plan to address these loopholes, and those that do not end up doing enough. The former is commonly known as grey list and latter as blacklist.
- **Once a country** is blacklisted, FATF calls on other countries to apply enhanced due diligence and counter measures, increasing the cost of doing business with the country and in some cases severing it altogether. As of now there are only two countries in the blacklist — Iran and North Korea — and seven on the grey list, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria and Yemen.

Awareness in technology and development of new technology.

- **RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil) initiative** The test assumes importance as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched the Repurpose Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative to collect and convert used cooking oil into bio-fuel.

- **About RUCO:** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had launched RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil), an initiative that will enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to bio-diesel. Under this initiative, 64 companies at 101 locations have been identified to enable collection of used cooking oil. For instance: McDonald's has already started converting used cooking oil to biodiesel from 100 outlets in Mumbai and Pune.
- **FSSAI wants** businesses using more than 100 litres of oil for frying, to maintain a stock register and ensure that UCO is handed over to only registered collecting agencies.
- **Significance of the initiative:** FSSAI believes India has the potential to recover 220 crore litres of used cooking oil for the production of biodiesel by 2022 through a co-ordinated action. While biodiesel produced from used cooking oil is currently very small, but a robust ecosystem for conversion and collection is rapidly growing in India and will soon reach a sizable scale.
- **Background:** The initiative has been launched nearly a month after the food safety regulator notified standards for used cooking oil. According to FSSAI regulations, the maximum permissible limits for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) have been set at 25%, beyond which the cooking oil is unsafe for consumption.
- **What are Total Polar Compounds (TPC)?** In many countries, TPC is used to measure the quality of oil. The level of TPC increases every time oil is re-heated. Some of the studies show that TPC accumulation in oil without food is slower than that in oil frying with food.
- **Higher level** of TPC in cooking oil leads to health issues like hypertension, atherosclerosis, Alzheimer's disease and liver disease. One of the studies also noticed high levels of glucose, creatinine and cholesterol with declined levels of protein and albumin in cooking oil.
- **Need for regulation:** Currently, used cooking oil is either not discarded or disposed of in such a manner that it chokes drains and sewerage systems. Apart from setting quality standards, the new regulation addresses the way this oil is discarded. As used cooking oil is considered the most reasonable feedstock for biodiesel production, the FSSAI is planning to redirect the used cooking oil from the food business operators. It has already started collecting used oil in small quantities either through a barter arrangement or at cost.
- **About FSSAI:** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- **It was created** for laying down science-based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption. Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.
- **Composition:** The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) are appointed by Government of India. The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to Government of India.

India to launch a public DNS server

- **Key features:** The new platform is an upgraded version with enhanced in-built security features compared to the earlier created by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and has a capability to host as many as 5 million users that can be scaled up further if needed.
- **If a user** inadvertently accesses a malicious or phishing site, the new public system would immediately open up a page or popup to alert the user of such potential threat so that the suspicious resource could be avoided, the official who is aware of the initiative.
- **The new DNS** will be placed across the country to minimise outage and would be available round the clock. Users can simply use it by typing the IP number into the Internet browser.
- **Need:** DNS is an important tool that requires to be fool-proof and has a major role in browsing the Internet. The Centre is eyeing a new and robust platform in the wake of critical digital services being delivered online requiring enhanced security to discourage cyber-attacks and a quicker site loading time.
- **What is Domain name system?** DNS is a system that translates domain names to Internet Protocol or IP addresses that allows browsers to load websites sought.
- **It is a database** that stores all of the domain names and corresponding IP numbers for a particular top-level domain (TLD) such as .com or .net. The DNS identifies and locates computer systems and resources on the Internet.

Why Bangladesh sees golden rice as a threat

- **What's the issue?** Bangladesh completed the confined field testing of golden rice at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), Gazipur, in early 2017. It has already allowed commercial production of BT Brinjal in the country.
- **Locals fear** that the introduction of golden rice will impact their traditional agriculture system.
- **It is alleged** that field trials were marred with controversy over the lack of transparency and credible independent safety studies. Even claims made after field trial concerns remain as on the lack of credible and independent safety studies, transparency and public participation.
- **Activists fear** that commercial cultivation would lead to the loss of Bangladesh's rich bio-diversity. This could further push for public acceptance of genetically-modified crops and erode our food diversity and our local and traditional seeds, as well as increase corporate control on our agriculture system.
- **What is Golden rice?** In 1999, a group of European scientists led by Dr Ingo Potrykus tried to change traditional rice by developing genetically-engineered rice that contains beta-carotene — by inserting bacteria and daffodil and maize genes into it. This is the golden rice, called so because of the golden colour of its grains.
- **The golden rice** was introduced in 2000 and argued to be the panacea for world's malnutrition problem. It was claimed that the rice is bio-fortified, and is supposedly high in Vitamin A, Iron and Zinc.
- **It was considered** as a significant breakthrough in biotechnology, with its first field trials conducted by the agriculture centre of Louisiana State University in 2004. Later, it has been claimed that field trials were conducted in the Philippines, Taiwan and Bangladesh.
- **What is a GM crop?** A GM or transgenic crop is a plant that has a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.
- **For example**, a GM crop can contain a gene(s) that has been artificially inserted instead of the plant acquiring it through pollination. The resulting plant is said to be "genetically modified" although in reality all crops have been "genetically modified" from their original wild state by domestication, selection, and controlled breeding over long periods of time.
- **GM is a solution to hunger problem:** Data from a large number of peer-reviewed publications have shown that, on average, GM technology adoption has reduced pesticide use by 37%, increased crop yield by 22%, and increased farmer profits by 68%. Data from a billion animals fed on GM corn have not indicated any health hazards. Those in the Americas and elsewhere consuming Bt corn or soybean for over 15 years have not reported any health issues.
- **Genetically modified (GM)** crops can withstand pests and droughts. Genetic modification in crops involves altering a seed's DNA in order to increase its resistance to pests and insects. These changes can mean a huge boost to productivity and overall food supply.
- **Adopting technology** that will lead to higher crop productivity is essential to feeding the growing Indian population. Higher crop yields, reduced farm costs, increased farm profit and improvement in health and the environment are some of the benefits of introducing GM crops.
- **There are some concerns as well:** GM food involves taking genes (DNA) from different organisms and inserting them in food crops. There are concerns that this 'foreign' DNA through Genetically Modified products may lead to risks such as toxicity, allergic reactions, and nutritional and unintended impact.
- **It costs people's health** and our national food and health sovereignty. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India [FSSAI], the apex food regulator, has failed to curb the illegal sales of GM food. Its draft regulations on GM food labelling are weak and impractical to implement.
- **Lack of clarity:** It is clear that the technology of genetic engineering is an evolving one and there is much, especially on its impact on human health and environment that is yet to be understood properly. The scientific community itself seems uncertain about this.
- **There is also a potential** for pests to evolve resistance to the toxins produced by GM crops and the risk of these toxins affecting nontarget organisms. There is also the danger of unintentionally introducing allergens and other anti-nutrition factors in foods.

Global Health Expenditure Database (GHED)

- **Health** spending consists of government expenditure, out-of-pocket payments (people paying for their own care), and sources such as voluntary health insurance, employer-provided health programmes, as well as activities by non-profits.
- **Highlights of the report:** According to the report, global spending on health has increased in low- and middle-income countries by 6% and in high income countries by 4%. However, worryingly, people are still paying too much out of their own pockets.

- **In low- and middle-income countries**, health spending is undergoing a transformation. The reliance of people on public funding has increased. In most regions, reliance on out-of-pocket spending is gradually going down and has also been associated with a reduction in the share of domestic government revenues allocated to health.
- **While the total amount** of aid that middle-income countries receive has increased, aid per capita, has fallen. In 2016, lower- and upper middle-income countries still received close to 57% of global aid, and certain middle-income countries still received large amounts of aid in absolute terms.
- **Therefore**, there is an inverse relationship between a country's income levels and the share of external aid as a health funding source. According to the report, the roles of external and domestic funding are evolving; however, external funding is declining in middle-income countries.
- **Governments** account for less than 40 per cent of primary health care spending.
- **There are huge variations** across countries in public spending on primary health care, which is intended to give people access to quality care, including access to medicines, as needed. Governments would be expected to pay for these medicines from domestic sources.
- **The data indicates** that nearly half of donor funds for health and about 20% of public spending on health went to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. About one-third of domestic public spending went towards injuries and non-communicable diseases, which received comparatively little external funds.
- **Significance of public spending on health:** Public spending on health is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets for health through sustainably funding common goods and subsidising services to the poorest segments of society.
- **A health system** that relies mainly on high levels of government funding, as well as a high share of public sources in overall health spending, generally provides better and more equitable access to services and better financial protection.
- **Way ahead:** Health is a human right and all countries need to prioritise efficient, cost-effective primary health care as the path to achieving universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Increased domestic** spending is essential for achieving universal health coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. But health spending is not a cost, it's an investment in poverty reduction, jobs, productivity, inclusive economic growth, and healthier, safer, fairer societies.

Hayabusa2

- **Notably**, Hayabusa2 is the second Japanese spacecraft to land on an asteroid, after Hayabusa achieved a similar feat back in 2005.
- **Hayabusa:** In mid-September 2005, Hayabusa landed on the asteroid Itokawa, and managed to collect samples in the form of grains of asteroidal material. It returned to Earth with the samples in June 2010, thereby becoming the first spacecraft to return asteroid samples to Earth for analysis.
- **Hayabusa2:** It is an asteroid sample-return mission operated by the Japanese space agency, JAXA. It was launched on 3 December 2014 and rendezvoused with near-Earth asteroid 162173 Ryugu on 27 June 2018. It is in the process of surveying the asteroid for a year and a half, departing in December 2019, and returning to Earth in December 2020.
- **Hayabusa2** carries multiple science payloads for remote sensing, sampling, and four small rovers that will investigate the asteroid surface to inform the environmental and geological context of the samples collected.
- **The Hayabusa2 payload incorporates multiple scientific instruments:** Remote sensing: Optical Navigation Camera (ONC-T, ONC-W1, ONC-W2), Near-Infrared Camera (NIR3), Thermal-Infrared Camera (TIR), Light Detection And Ranging (LIDAR). Sampling: Sampling device (SMP), Small Carry-on Impactor (SCI), Deployable Camera (DCAM3). Four rovers: Mobile Asteroid Surface Scout (MASCOT), Rover-1A, Rover-1B, Rover-2.
- **The scientific objectives of Hayabusa2 mission are twofold:** To characterize the asteroid from remote sensing observations (with multispectral cameras, near-infrared spectrometer, thermal infrared imager, laser altimeter) on a macroscopic scale To analyse the samples returned from the asteroid on a microscopic scale.
- **What is the significance of the mission?** Ryugu is a C-type asteroid – a relic from the early days of the Solar System. Scientists think that C-type asteroids contain both organic matter, and trapped water, and might have been responsible for bringing both to Earth, thereby providing the planet with the materials necessary for life to originate.

Seoul Peace Prize:

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has received the prestigious Seoul Peace Prize for 2018 for his contribution to international cooperation and fostering global economic growth.
- **Modi is the 14th** recipient of the award and the past laureates included former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and renowned international relief organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam.
- **About Seoul Peace Prize:** Established in 1990 to commemorate success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, South Korea. Established to crystallize Korean people's yearning for peace on Korean Peninsula and in the rest of the world.
- **Awarded biennially** to those individuals who have made their mark through contributions to harmony of mankind, reconciliation between nations and world peace.

Velayat 97:

- **What is it?** It is a navy drill being conducted by Iran. It aims to evaluate the navy's equipment, practice launching weapons and enable the troops to gain readiness for a real battle.

World's largest bee spotted for the first time since 1981:

- **Context:** The world's largest bee — a giant insect roughly the size of a human thumb — has been rediscovered in a remote part of Indonesia in its first sighting in nearly 40 years.
- **The Wallace's giant bee** (*Megachile pluto*), which lives in the Indonesian island region of North Moluccas, makes its nest in termite mounds, using its large fang-like mandibles to collect sticky resin to protect its home from the termites.
- **The IUCN Red List** of Threatened Species lists the bee as "vulnerable", meaning that while its numbers are relatively solid, the remoteness of its population makes it hard to study.

Beresheet- Israel's First Lunar Lander Launched:

- **Context:** Israel's First Lunar Lander- Beresheet— was recently launched on board Falcon 9.
- **Beresheet** will attempt to become the first Israeli spacecraft, and the first privately-operated mission, to land on the Moon.
- **If successful**, it will make the Jewish state only the fourth nation to ever to achieve a controlled touchdown on the moon's surface. So far, only three other nations have carried out controlled "soft" landings on the moon – the United States, the former Soviet Union and China. Spacecraft from several countries, including India's Moon Impact Probe, Japan's SELENE orbiter and a European Space Agency orbital probe called SMART 1, have intentionally crashed on the lunar surface.
- **Beresheet** would mark the first non-government lunar landing. The 1,290-pound (585-kg) spacecraft was built by Israeli nonprofit space venture SpacEL and state-owned defense contractor Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) with \$100 million furnished almost entirely by private donors.
- **Beresheet** is designed to spend just two to three days using on-board instruments to photograph its landing site and measure the moon's magnetic field. Data will be relayed via the US space agency NASA's Deep Space Network to SpacEL's Israel-based ground station Yehud.

Report flags growing threat of monoculture in crop production:

- **Context:** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has released its report- "The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture 2019."
- **Concerns highlighted by the report:** The report highlights the growing practice of monoculture —cultivation of a single crop at a given area — in food production around the world. Only 9 plant species account for almost two-thirds of total crop production.
- **In many parts** of the world, biodiverse agricultural landscapes have been, or are being, replaced by large areas of monoculture, farmed using large quantities of external inputs such as pesticides, mineral fertilizers and fossil fuels.
- **The report lists** drivers of change affecting biodiversity for food and agriculture, including: Population growth and urbanization. Over-exploitation and over-harvesting. Changes in land and water use and management. Pests, diseases and invasive alien species. Climate change. Pollution and external inputs. Natural disasters. Markets, trade and the private sector.
- **Why Monoculture farming may not be good?** If a single variety is widely grown, a pest or disease to which it lacks resistance can lead to a dramatic fall in production. If livelihoods are heavily dependent on the species in question, the effects can be disastrous. Examples:
- **The 1840 potato blight famine in Ireland.** The 20th century losses in cereals in the United States. Losses of taro production in Samoa in the 1990s.
- **Why diversify?** Diversifying crop cultivation reduces risk of economic shocks: "Integrating intercrops, hedgerows or cover crops, particularly legumes, into a system can reduce drought stress by helping to conserve water in the soil profile and help to replenish depleted soil fertility."
- **Also, "crop diversification,** including rotation and intercropping and the use of diverse forage plants in pastureland, can reduce pest damage and weed invasions."
- **The need of the hour:** New supply systems. Improved public-private partnerships.

UPSC = Fever



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Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi

- **About Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi:** Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year.
- **This income support** will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal installments of Rs. 2,000 each. The complete expenditure of Rs 75000 crore for the scheme will borne by the Union Government in 2019-20.
- **Significance:** Around 12 crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit from this. It would not only provide assured supplemental income to the most vulnerable farmer families, but would also meet their emergent needs especially before the harvest season. It would pave the way for the farmers to earn and live a respectable living.
- **Similar programmes by states:** Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana in Madhya Pradesh was sought to provide relief to farmers by providing the differential between MSPs and market prices.
- **The Rythu Bandhu** scheme of the Telangana government provides ₹4,000 per acre for every season to all the farmers of the state. Similar initiatives have also be framed in Jharkhand and Odisha.
- **In December 2018** , Odisha launched the Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income augmentation (KALIA). KALIA is more complicated in design and implementation. It commits to give Rs 5,000 per SMF, twice a year, that is Rs 10,000 a year.
- **Benefits of direct cash transfers:** It has immediate impact on reducing hunger and rural poverty. They can help households to overcome credit constraints and manage risk. This can increase productive investment, increase access to markets and stimulate local economies.
- **Income support** can be used to make a repayment or at least activate a bank account which can then receive a loan. It can increase investment in agricultural inputs, including farm implements and livestock.
- **It can serve** as an important complement to a broader rural development agenda, including a pro-poor growth strategy focusing on agriculture.
- **Challenges with cash transfers- criticisms:** Landless labourers are not being covered under PM-KISAN. Cash transfers are not greatly superior in terms of leakages compared to other schemes of in-kind transfer such as the public distribution system (PDS).
- **A targeted** cash transfer scheme envisions the role of the state to only providing cash income to the poor. This kind of approach seeks to absolve the state of its responsibility in providing basic services such as health, education, nutrition and livelihood.
- **Cash transfer** scheme such as PM-KISAN cannot be substituted for subsidies and other institutional support systems such as the National Food Security Act-powered public distribution system. In fact, such cash transfer schemes could be counterproductive and may lead to more distress.
- **Cash transfers** do not solve the following problems which are the reasons for the current agrarian crisis. The Agrarian crisis is not just of low incomes in agriculture. The genesis of the current crisis lies in the faulty and ad hoc export-import policy, lack of infrastructure and cartelisation and collusion in agricultural markets, which have prevented farmers from realizing the market prices for agricultural produce.
- **Cash transfer** is neither a substitute for the structural reforms needed in agriculture, nor does it adequately compensate the farmer for the risks and uncertainty of crop cultivation. In the absence of proper tenancy records, it will also benefit the absentee landlords.
- **It is no** substitute for the lack of investment in agriculture, which has declined at 2.3% per annum in real terms.
- **Conclusion:** PM-KISAN is an ambitious scheme that has the potential to deliver significant welfare outcomes. However, the current top-down, rushed approach of the government ignores governance constraints and is therefore likely to result in failure. An alternative bottom-up strategy and well-planned implementation mechanism would allow weaknesses to be identified and rectified at the local level. The most effective modalities can then be scaled nationally and ensure success.

Draft e-commerce policy

- **KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED:** Data Infrastructure development. Ecommerce marketplaces. Regulatory issues. Stimulating domestic digital economy. Export promotion.
 - **Key features of the draft:** **INDIAN CONTROL OVER DATA:** Govt to be given access to source code, algorithms of AI systems Impose custom duties on electronic transmissions to reduce revenue loss. It bars sharing of sensitive data of Indian users with third party entities, even with consent.
 - **A 'data authority' to look at community data.** **LOCAL PRESENCE FOR APPS & WEBSITES:** All ecommerce websites, apps available for downloading in India to have a registered business entity here. Non-compliant ecommerce app/website to be denied access here. **INCENTIVES FOR DATA LOCALISATION:** Location of the computing facilities like data centres, server farms within India. Firms to get 3 years to comply with local data storage requirements.
 - **Data storage** facilities to get 'infrastructure status'. **FDI IN ECOMM:** FDI only in marketplace model. No FDI in inventory model.
 - **ECOMMERCE TRADE:** Curbs on Chinese ecommerce exports. Gifting route, often used by Chinese apps, websites, banned for all parcels except life-saving drugs. Integrating Customs, RBI and India Post to improve tacking of imports through ecommerce.
 - **Incentives & e-commerce export promotions.** Ecommerce startups may get 'infant industry' status raising limit for courier shipments from Rs 25,000 to boost ecommerce export.
 - **REGUALTION:** No separate regulator for ecommerce sector. E-consumer courts to be developed.
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- **Monkey Declared Vermin in Himachal Pradesh** The state government had urged the centre to declare Monkeys as vermin because the animals have been adversely affecting crops and causing harm to humans.
- **Declaring animals as vermin:** Wildlife laws divide species into 'schedules' ranked from I to V. Schedule I members are the best protected, in theory, with severe punishments meted out to those who hunt them. Wild boars, nilgai and rhesus monkeys are Schedule II and III members — also protected, but can be hunted under specific conditions. Crows and fruit bat fall in Schedule 5, the vermin category.
- **Section 11(1)a** of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) authorizes chief wildlife warden to permit hunting of any problem wild animal only if it cannot be captured, tranquilized or translocated.
- **For wild animals** in Schedule II, III or IV, chief wildlife warden or authorized officers can permit their hunting in a specified area if they have become dangerous to humans or property (including standing crops on any land). Section 62 of Act empowers Centre to declare wild animals other than Schedule I & II to be vermin for specified area and period.
- **Concerns:** Not many are happy with these decisions. These decisions raise questions about whether it is right to kill wildlife that damage crops. More pertinent is whether the problem has been framed and assessed correctly, and culling the appropriate solution in the first place.
- **Why culling is not a good idea?** Removal through capture or killing may not prevent recurrence of conflicts and may even exacerbate them. Himachal Pradesh, for instance, killed hundreds of rhesus macaques in 2007 with conflicts recurring within two years, sterilised over 96,000 macaques since 2007 while conflicts continued to increase.
- **When animals** are hunted, some will be shot several times causing tremendous pain, but many others escape with one gunshot or flesh wound, and die later slowly and in unimaginable agony from blood loss, gangrene, starvation or dehydration. When mother animals are killed, orphaned babies are left behind to starve.
- **Provisions** to allow wild animals to be killed can also be easily misused and contribute to the illegal wildlife trade. There is already a huge black market for nilgai body parts such as skin, teeth, nails and meat in Uttar Pradesh and wild boar are often used for meat.
- **In parts of India**, wildlife species such as wild pig, elephants, macaques, and nilgai occasionally damage crops or property. However, no reliable estimates of economic loss nationwide are available.

- **Following list of reasons that scientists' show us why the animal isn't the problem:** Habitat loss: Deforestation and lowered green cover in cities has been driving animals into crop fields and human dwellings in search of food. Fall in predator population: Fall in population of predators such as tigers and leopards leads to a consequential rise in population of herbivores such as nilgai and deer.
- **Drought:** If natural calamities such as drought affect human beings, so is the case with animals in the forest. Drought dries up availability of food for foraging driving wild animals into nearby crop fields and human dwellings in search of food.
- **Humans feeding animals:** this is one of the major problems these days. Tourists often offer foods to animals roadside. This habit makes them chase tourists expecting the same from all tourists.
- **What are the alternatives available?** Crop damage by wildlife may occur when animals enter crop fields because of habitat alteration and fragmentation, because crops are edible, or because the fields lie along movement routes to forest patches or water sources. For this, site-specific scientific information is needed which helps design targeted mitigation with participation of affected people. This includes supporting local communities to install — and, more important, maintain on a sustained basis — bio-fencing and power fencing around vulnerable areas.
- **Crop insurance** for wildlife damage, which the Environment Ministry recently recommended can be included in the National Crop/Agricultural Insurance Programme. An insurance approach recognises wildlife as a part of the shared countryside and as a risk to be offset rather than viewing wildlife as antagonists belonging to the State that one wishes away.
- **Solutions** such as adequate fencing, noisemakers, and repelling animals naturally from farms through the use of chili plants or other such means can be tried. In Africa, for example, the planting of chili plants around crops was found to be successful in addressing conflict with elephants.

Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan

- **About Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan:** The scheme aims to deepen water bodies in the state before monsoon to increase storage of rainwater to be used during times of scarcity. It involves cleaning and desilting of riverfronts, sprucing up of Irrigation canals.
- **Background:** During the first edition against its anticipated target of 16,616 works of deepening of ponds and lakes across the state, 18,220 works were accomplished. The first edition witnessed an increase in the water storage capacity of more than 11,000 lakh cubic feet rainwater through different sources like ponds, reservoirs, check dams, bori bandh and other.
- **The desilting** had also generated a huge amount of loose/soil or clay which can be used by farmers to increase agricultural productivity.

Cheetah reintroduction project

- **International Union** for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has given a 'no objection' for the translocation.
- **Facts:** The cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus*, is one of the oldest of the big cat species, with ancestors that can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era.
- **The cheetah** is also the world's fastest land mammal, an icon of nature. With great speed and dexterity, the cheetah is known for being an excellent hunter, its kills feeding many other animals in its ecosystem—ensuring that multiple species survive.
- **The country's** last spotted feline died in Chhattisgarh in 1947. Later, the cheetah — which is the fastest land animal — was declared extinct in India in 1952.
- **Cheetah reintroduction programme in India:** The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a ₹260-crore cheetah re-introduction project six years ago. It was estimated that an amount of ₹25 crore to ₹30 crore would be needed to build an enclosure in an area of 150 sq km for the cheetahs in Nauradehi. The proposal was to put the felines in the enclosure with huge boundary walls before being released in the wild, he said.
- **Nauradehi** was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat. Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary.
- **According** to the earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa. The Namibia Cheetah Conservation Fund had then showed its willingness to donate the felines to India. However, the State was not ready to finance the plan contending that it was the Centre's project.

- **Background:** The reasons for extinction can all be traced to man's interference. Problems like human-wildlife conflict, loss of habitat and loss of prey, and illegal trafficking, have decimated their numbers. The advent of climate change and growing human populations have only made these problems worse. With less available land for wildlife, species that require vast home range like the cheetah are placed in competition with other animals and humans, all fighting over less space.

Permanent Residence Certificate

- **The protests** spread despite a state government assurance that they had deferred the plan to give them PRC.
- **Background:** Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Morans, Adivasis and Mishings were demanding Permanent Residence Certificate. Most of these communities are recognised as Scheduled Tribes in neighbouring Assam. According to reports, the demand by these communities for PRC, recognising them as residents of the state, is long-standing, but is opposed by powerful groups.
- **What is Permanent Residence Certificate?** The State Government of Arunachal Pradesh issues the domicile certificate otherwise called as Permanent Residence Certificate (PRC) to the residents of the state who stayed therein over a period. Those citizens who are not currently residing in the state but are sure of permanently staying therein can also apply for it.
- **Besides the permanent residence certificate**, the State also offers Temporary Residence Certificate (TRC) for those who reside in the State on a temporary basis.
- **Purpose of the Certificate:** Permanent Residence Certificate is a legal document that serves as an evidence of residence and thus must be submitted wherever a residence proof is required. Permanent Residence Certificate should be produced in many situations such as admission in educational organisations, job reservation under specific quotas especially for government jobs, etc. to get local preferences.
- **To apply** for ration card permanent residence certificate is a vital and mandate document. To avail the provisions of various schemes of the state or to claim scholarships of the State, permanent residence certificate is essential.

Islamic Cooperation countries (OIC)

- **Background:** India has never been invited to the OIC before and the latest development, coming at a time when the India-Pakistan tension is running high, is being seen as a diplomatic success.
- **About the OIC:** Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states. It is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations.
- **The organisation** states that it is "the collective voice of the Muslim world" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".
- **The OIC** has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.

Afghanistan opens new export route to India through Iran's Chabahar port

- **Chabahar port** is the result of healthy cooperation between India, Iran and Afghanistan this will ensure economic growth. The Iranian port provides easy access to the sea to Afghanistan and India has helped developed this route to allow both countries to engage in trade bypassing Pakistan.
- **Where is Chabahar port?** Iran's Chabahar port is located on the Gulf of Oman and is the only oceanic port of the country. The port gives access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations' southern coast.

- **Why Chabahar port is crucial for India?** The first and foremost significance of the Chabahar port is the fact that India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan. Chabahar port will boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.
- **Chabahar port** will be beneficial to India in countering Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port. Gwadar port is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.
- **With Chabahar port** being developed and operated by India, Iran also becomes a military ally to India. Chabahar could be used in case China decides to flex its navy muscles by stationing ships in Gwadar port to reckon its upper hand in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Middle East.
- **With Chabahar port** becoming functional, there will be a significant boost in the import of iron ore, sugar and rice to India. The import cost of oil to India will also see a considerable decline. India has already increased its crude purchase from Iran since the West imposed ban on Iran was lifted.
- **Chabahar port** will ensure in the establishment of a politically sustainable connectivity between India and Afghanistan. This will in turn, lead to better economic ties between the two countries.
- **From a diplomatic perspective**, Chabahar port could be used as a point from where humanitarian operations could be coordinated.

EVM is 'information' under Right to Information Act

- **The ruling:** The machine is covered under the definition of "information" and can be demanded from the ECI.
- **As per Section 2(f) and 2(i)** of the RTI Act, the definition of 'information' and 'record' also includes 'any model or any sample' held by a public authority.
- **Section 2(f)** of the RTI Act defines 'Information' as any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force.
- **Implications of this ruling:** This implies the Election Commission has to respond to an RTI application seeking the EVM either by providing it or refusing it under exemption clauses in the Act. But that also can be contested before the CIC, the highest adjudicating authority in RTI matters.
- **Background:** An information can be denied by a public authority if it attracts any exemption clauses listed in the RTI Act which also exempts information pertaining to commercial confidence or intellectual property from disclosure.
- **One of the clauses** Section 8(1)(d) exempts information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, unless the competent authority is satisfied that larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information.
- **Basics about CIC:** What is the eligibility criteria and what is the process of appointment of CIC/IC? Section 12(3) of the RTI Act 2005 provides as follows: The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee; The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha; and A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
- **Eligibility:** Section 12(5) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance.
- **Section 12(6)** of the RTI Act 2005 provides that Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner shall not be a Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union Territory as the case may be, or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession.
- **What is the term of office and other service conditions of CIC?** Section 13 of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment.
- **Section 13(5)(a)** of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of the Chief Information Commissioner shall be the same as that of the Chief Election Commissioner.

Why India needs to set up a public credit registry?

- **Problems** with the current credit information system: At present, the credit information market in India, though mature, is highly fragmented.
- **What is Public Credit Registry?** The PCR will be an extensive database of credit information for India that is accessible to all stakeholders. The idea is to capture all relevant information in one large database on the borrower and, in particular, the borrower's entire set of borrowing contracts and outcomes.
- **The proposed PCR** will also include data from entities like market regulator Sebi, the corporate affairs ministry, Goods and Service Tax Network (GSTN) and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) to enable banks and financial institutions to get a 360-degree profile of the existing as well as prospective borrowers on a real-time basis.
- **Need for a PCR:** A central repository, which 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.

UPSC = Fever



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Key missions launched on foundation day of Department of Biotechnology Posted On: 26 FEB 2019 2:43PM by PIB Delhi

- **Department of Biotechnology** in the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, celebrated its 33rd Foundation Day today in New Delhi with the theme as "Celebrating Biotechnology: Building Indian as an Innovation Nation".
- **On the occasion Union Minister** for Science & Technology, Dr. Harsh Vardhan gave away the Biotechnology Research Innovation and Technology Excellence (BRITE) awards. The Union Minister emphasized the role of Department of Biotechnology during the last 33 years in creating a large scale impact across the multiple sectors by development and commercialization of affordable solutions for healthcare, improved crop varieties, animal diagnostics and technology for generation of clean energy. Further, he highlighted the progress made in the area of capacity building, generation of new knowledge, translational research and in nurturing of Biotechnology startup ecosystem.
- **The Minister announced** key missions at the foundation day ceremony including Atal JaiAnusandhan Biotech Mission - Undertaking Nationally Relevant Technology Innovation (UNaTI), which is expected to transform Health, Agriculture and Energy sectors during the next 5 years. This mission includes GARBH-ini - A Mission to promote Maternal and Child Health and develop prediction tools for pre-term berth, IndCEPI - A Mission to develop affordable vaccines for endemic diseases, Development of Biofortified and Protein Rich wheat - contributing to POSHAN Abhiyan, Mission on Anti Microbial Resistance for Affordable Diagnostics and Therapeutics and Clean Energy Mission - Innovative Technology interventions for Swachh Bharat.
- **Dr. Harsh Vardhan** further informed that the Department has recently established Skill Development Centers at various institutions and also collaborated with State Council of Science and Technology for implementation of Skill Vigyan programme which aims to provide high quality hands on training in tools and techniques in multidisciplinary area of biotechnology for entry level students. On the occasion, the Union Minister also unveiled short film on DBT activities, launched new DBT website and released Coffee Table book.
- **The Science & Technology** Minister also highlighted that Discovery research and generation of new knowledge of biological sciences is very important and is fundamental and foundation of innovation and Department's support to competitive R&D activities in biotechnology has resulted in more than 6000 publications.

President of India presents Gandhi Peace Prize Posted On: 26 FEB 2019 12:56PM by PIB Delhi

- **The President of India**, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented the Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 in the presence of the Prime Minister and other dignitaries, at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan today (February 26, 2019).
- **The Gandhi Peace Prize** was presented to the Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari for 2015, jointly to the Akshaya Patra Foundation and the Sulabh International for 2016, to the Ekal Abhiyan Trust for 2017, and to Shri Yohei Sasakawa for 2018.
- **Speaking on the occasion**, the President said that Gandhian thinking, Gandhian modes of struggle and Gandhian ideals of achieving human liberty by conciliation, by appealing to the conscience of the opponent, have influenced some of the greatest of our age. From Martin Luther King Jr in the United States to Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Lech Walesa in Poland, a dazzling galaxy of statespersons has learnt and borrowed from Gandhiji. Gandhiji and his thoughts are invaluable to any understanding of contemporary human history, and of the quest to redress oppression and inequity.
- **The President said that Mahatma Gandhi** remains relevant to 21st century concerns as well. In his advocacy of sustainability, ecological sensitivity and living in harmony with nature, he anticipated some of the pressing challenges of our times. The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations are Gandhian philosophy in action. India's pivotal role in the International Solar Alliance and its domestic Swachh Bharat Mission – aimed at the universalisation of modern sanitation – too are reflective of Gandhiji.

- **Pointing to the contributions** made by the awardees, the President said that the Vivekananda Centre has promoted self-help, sustainability and development throughout our country, especially in areas populated by tribal communities. It has built capacities in education and health, and in a sensitive and meaningful approach to rural development and harnessing of natural resources. The Akshaya Patra Foundation has advanced education and cognition by working to remove hunger and enhance nutrition. It has leveraged modern technology to provide quality meals to schoolchildren. The Sulabh International and its founder Dr Bindeshwar Pathak were sanitation pioneers, advocating the merits of sanitation and advocating toilets in days and years when not many others were. The Ekal Abhiyan Trust is helping 2.2 million children – 52 per cent of them girls – access education. Many of its initiatives benefit tribal communities. Mr Yohei Sasakawa has been instrumental in helping us win crucial battles in the war against leprosy – to prevent and eradicate the disease, and to end stigma and discrimination.

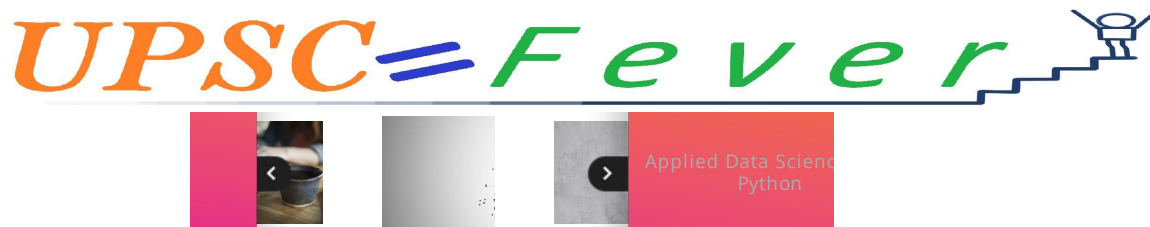
Examining the anti-trafficking Bill, 2018

- **The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018** is listed for passage in Rajya Sabha today. Earlier this year, the Bill was introduced and passed in Lok Sabha. It provides for the prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation of trafficked persons. If the Bill is not passed today, it will lapse with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha. In this post, we analyse the Bill in its current form.
- **What was the need for a new law?** According to the National Crime Records Bureau, 8,132 human trafficking cases were reported in India in 2016 under the Indian Penal Code, 1860.[i] In the same year, 23,117 trafficking victims were rescued. Of these, the highest number of persons were trafficked for forced labour (45.5%), followed by prostitution (21.5%).
- **In India**, the offence of trafficking is dealt with under different laws. Trafficking is primarily an offence under the Indian Penal Code, 1860. It defines trafficking to include recruiting, transporting, or harboring persons by force or other means, for exploitation. In addition, there are a range of laws presently which deal with bonded labour, exploitation of children, and commercial sexual exploitation. Each of these laws operate independently, have their own enforcement machinery and prescribe penalties for offences related to trafficking.
- **In 2015**, pursuant to a Supreme Court order, the Ministry of Women and Child Development constituted a Committee to identify gaps in the current legislation on trafficking and to examine the feasibility of a comprehensive legislation on trafficking.[ii] Consequently, the Trafficking Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Ms. Maneka Gandhi in July, 2018.
- **What does the Bill seek to do?** The Bill provides for the investigation of trafficking cases, and rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked victims. It includes trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, slavery, or forced removal of organs. In addition, the law also considers trafficking for certain purposes, such as for begging or for inducing early sexual maturity, to be an aggravated form of trafficking. These forms of trafficking attract a higher punishment.
- **In order to punish trafficking**, the Bill provides for the setting up of investigation and rehabilitation authorities at the district, state and national level. The primary investigation responsibility lies with anti-trafficking police officers and anti-trafficking units constituted at the district level. The authority at the national level can take over investigation of cases referred to it by two or more states.
- **The Bill also provides** for the setting up of Protection Homes and Rehabilitation Homes to provide care and rehabilitation to the victims. The Bill supplements the rehabilitation efforts through a Rehabilitation Fund, which will be used to set up the Protection and Rehabilitation Homes. Special Courts will be designated in every district to complete trial of trafficking cases within a year.
- **Additionally**, the Bill specifies penalties for various offences including for promotion of trafficking and trafficking with the aid of media. All offences are cognizable (i.e. police officer can arrest without a warrant) and non-bailable. If a person is found guilty under the Bill and also under any other law, the punishment which is higher will apply to the offender.
- **How does the Bill compare with existing trafficking laws?** The current Bill does not replace but adds to the existing legal framework. As discussed above, currently a range of laws deal with various aspects of trafficking. For instance, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986 covers trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation while the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 deals with punishment for employment of bonded labour. These laws specify their own procedures for enforcement and rehabilitation.
- **One of the challenges** with the Bill is that these laws will continue to be in force after the Bill. Since each of these laws have different procedures, it is unclear as to which procedure will apply in certain cases of trafficking. This may result in overlap in implementation of these laws. For instance, under the ITPA, 1986, Protective Homes provide for rehabilitation of victims of sexual exploitation. The Bill also provides for setting up of Protection Homes. When a victim of sexual exploitation is rescued, it is not clear as to which of these Homes she will be sent to. Further, each of these laws designate special courts to hear offences. The question arises as to which of these courts will hear the case.
- **Are the offences in the Bill reasonably tailored?** As discussed earlier, the Bill imposes penalties for various offences connected with trafficking. One of the offences states that if trafficking is committed on a premise, it will be presumed that the owner of the premise had knowledge of the offence. The implication of this would be that if an owner lives in a different city, say Delhi, and lets out his house in Mumbai to another person, and this person is discovered to be detaining girls for sexual exploitation on the premise, it will be presumed that the owner knew about the commission of the offence. In such circumstances, he will have to prove that he did not know about the offence being committed on his premise. This provision is a departure from the standard principle in criminal law where the guilt of the accused has to be proved and not presumed.

- **There are other laws** where the owner of a property is presumed guilty. However, the prosecution is required to prove certain facts before presuming his guilt. For instance, under the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 it is presumed that the owner has knowledge of an offence committed on his property. However, the Bill clarifies that the presumption will only apply if the prosecution can prove that the accused was connected with the circumstances of the case. For instance, an owner of a truck is not presumed to be guilty only because his truck was used for transporting drugs.[iii] However, he may be considered guilty if he was also driving the truck in which drugs were transported.[iv] The Bill does not contain such safeguards and this provision may therefore violate Article 21 of the Constitution which requires that laws which deprive a person of his life or personal liberty should be fair and reasonable.[v]
- **Does the Bill provide any protection to trafficking victims compelled to commit crimes?** The Bill provides immunity to a victim who commits an offence punishable with death, life imprisonment or imprisonment for 10 years. Immunity to victims is desirable to ensure that they are not prosecuted for committing crimes which are a direct consequence of them being trafficked.[vi] However, the Bill provides immunity only for serious crimes. For instance, a trafficked victim who commits murder under coercion of his traffickers may be able to claim immunity from being tried for murder. However, if a trafficked victim commits petty theft (e.g. pickpocketing) under coercion of his traffickers, he will not be able to claim immunity.
- **Further, the immunity** is only available when the victim can show that the offence was committed under coercion, threat, intimidation or undue influence, and there was a reasonable apprehension of death or injury. Therefore, it may be argued that the threshold to claim immunity from prosecution may be too high and may defeat the purpose for providing such immunity.

Curtain Raiser: India-Bangladesh Joint Military Exercise Sampriti - 2019

- **As part of the ongoing** India Bangladesh defence cooperation, a joint military exercise Sampriti-2019 will be conducted at Tangail, Bangladesh from 02 March to 15 March 2019. Exercise Sampriti-2019 is an important bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and Bangladesh and this will be the eighth edition of the exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.
- **The exercise is aimed** to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies. The exercise will involve tactical level operations in a counter insurgency and counter terrorism environment under the UN mandate.
- **In addition** to understanding each other in tactical level operations, emphasis will also be laid for greater cultural understanding to strengthen military trust and cooperation between the two nations.



Union HRD Minister launches the Scheme for Higher Education Youth in

- **Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS)** for providing industry apprenticeship opportunities
- **SHREYAS will help the youth to obtain gainful employment and contribute to country's progress** : Shri Prakash Javadekar Posted On: 27 FEB 2019 6:03PM by PIB Delhi
- **The Minister** for Human Resources Development, Shri Prakash Javadekar has launched the Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS) for providing industry apprenticeship opportunities to the general graduates exiting in April 2019 through the National Apprenticeship Promotional Scheme (NAPS). Launched in New Delhi today, the program aims to enhance the employability of Indian youth by providing 'on the job work exposure' and earning of stipend.
- **Speaking on the occasion**, the Minister said that the education with skills is the need of the hour and the SHREYAS will be a major effort in this direction to make our degree students more skilled, capable, employable and aligned to the needs of our economy so that they contribute to country's progress and also obtain gainful employment.
- **He informed** that SHREYAS is a programme conceived for students in degree courses, primarily non-technical, with a view to introduce employable skills into their learning, promote apprenticeship as integral to education and also amalgamate employment facilitating efforts of the Government into the education system so that clear pathways towards employment opportunities are available to students during and after their graduation.
- **The Minister** also informed that SHREYAS is a programme basket comprising the initiatives of three Central Ministries, namely the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Labour & Employment viz the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), the National Career Service (NCS) and introduction of BA/BSc/BCom (Professional) courses in the higher educational institutions.
- **SHREYAS portal** will enable educational institutions and industry to log in and provide their respective demand and supply of apprenticeship. The matching of students with apprenticeship avenues will take place as per pre-specified eligibility criteria. The State Governments are expected to play a major role in securing apprenticeship opportunities, apart from the Sector Skill Councils, so that general degree students passing out in April 2019, gain the option of industry & service sector apprenticeship.
- **Further**, the SSCs have identified more than 100 NSQF aligned Job roles/courses in the sectors of IT, Retail, Logistics, Tourism, Healthcare, BFSI, Electronics, Media, Life Sciences and Management, which the exiting graduates can take up under Apprenticeship program. These courses will be available to them from Academic year April-May, 2019. More than 40 higher educational institutions have already been tied up for taking up embedded apprenticeship courses.

PM to confer Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes for Science and Technology tomorrow Posted On: 27 FEB 2019 6:53PM by PIB Delhi

- **The Prime Minister**, Shri Narendra Modi, will attend the award ceremony for the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Science and Technology, at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi, on 28 February 2019.
- **The Prime Minister** will confer the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes for 2016, 2017 and 2018 to the awardees. He will also address the gathering.
- **The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize** is named after the founder Director of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, Dr. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar. The Prize is given each year to recognize outstanding Indian work in various disciplines of Science and Technology.

National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 awards

- **Background:** National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 was celebrated on 12th January, 2019, on the occasion of National Youth Day.
- **National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 Theme:** "Be The Voice of New India" and "Find solutions and contribute to policy". Eligibility: Youth in the age bracket of 18-25 years are invited to participate in the District Youth Parliaments.
- **Significance:** The National Youth Parliament Festival will encourage the youth to engage with public issues, understand the common man's point of view, form their opinion and express these in an articulate manner. Relevant and effective voices on the vision of New India would be captured and documented to make these available to policy makers and implementers to take it forward.
- **National Youth Parliament Festival 2019** has been jointly organised by National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) under the aegis of Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.
- **National Youth Day:** The National Youth Day (also called as Yuva Diwas) is observed on January 12 every year to commemorate the birthday of Swami Vivekananda.
- **The main objective** is to propagate the philosophy and the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. It became a mainstream celebration in India from 1985 onwards and observed on January 12 ever since.
- **About National Service Scheme (NSS):** The National Service Scheme is an Indian government-sponsored public service program conducted by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Government of India.
- **The scheme was launched in Gandhiji's Centenary year in 1969.** The University Grants Commission (UGC) headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan recommended introduction of national service in the academic institutions on a voluntary basis with a view to developing healthy contacts between the students and teachers on the one hand and establishing a constructive linkage between the campus and the community on the other hand.
- **About Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan:** Nehru Yuva Kendras was established in 1972. Later in 1987 under Rajiv Gandhi Government it became Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, an autonomous organization under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Skill Saathi Youth Conclave

- **The Skill Saathi** initiative has so far mobilised and counselled over 1 lakh candidate in Odisha and over 10 lakh youth across the country in the past three months.
- **About Skill Saathi Scheme:** The Skills Career Counselling Scheme aims to counsel 1 crore candidates from the age group of 15– 35 years focusing on School & College drop-outs, young adults from the community, college students, polytechnic students, ITI students, Diploma students, Graduates, Post-Graduates, NEET category (Not in Employment education or Training), etc. pan India from August 2018.
- **Counselling** will be conducted on a standardized module/content as defined by NSDC/MSDE. Objectives of the Skill Saathi Scheme: Create Awareness about the Skill India Mission and inform the youth of India about vocational education and its opportunities. Sensitize prospective candidates about available Market Opportunities under the Skill India Mission.
- **Facilitate Psychometric Testing** and Face-To-Face Counselling Interventions to create an individual-level impact to guide aspirants to make the right choice of training and subsequent employment/entrepreneurship. Facilitate Understanding of the concepts of New India, the prospects of India becoming the Skill Capital of the World and how the new generation of youth can become drivers of change.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban

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

Global Digital Health Partnership

- **About GDHP:** Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP) is an international collaboration of governments, government agencies and multinational organisations dedicated to improving the health and well-being of their citizens through the best use of evidence-based digital technologies.
- **Established in February 2018**, the GDHP provides an opportunity for transformational engagement between its participants, who are striving to learn and share best practice and policy that can support their digital health systems.
- **It has been created** to provide an international platform to facilitate global collaboration and cooperation to share policy insights, best practices and evidence based implementation of safe, secure digital technologies to improve the quality, accessibility and sustainability of health systems.
- **GDHP Member Countries:** Currently, 23 countries are the member of this group which include Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, Hong Kong SAR, India, Japan Republic of Indonesia, Italy, New Zealand, Netherlands Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States, Ukraine, Uruguay and the World Health Organization.
- **Five work streams of GDHP:** Cyber Security. Evidence and Evaluation. Policy Environments. Interoperability Clinical and Consumer Engagement.
- **Why is the GDHP important for populations globally?** As countries around the world face the challenges of designing systems and delivering services that result in good health and well-being for their citizens, digital technologies can provide potential solutions. They can improve the safety, quality and effectiveness of healthcare, support earlier diagnosis of disease and the development of new medicines and treatments. They can empower patients, citizens and the care professionals who serve them.
- **Governments** are making significant investments to harness the power of technology and foster innovation and public-private partnerships that support high quality, sustainable health and care for all. The GDHP facilitates global collaboration and co-operation in the implementation of digital health services. There is currently no similar international forum to share best practice and enable co-working in digital health.

'IPrism'

- **Aiming to foster** a culture of innovation and creativity in the younger generation, the competition will provide young creators an opportunity to see their creations recognized on a national platform.
- **About CIPAM:** Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) has been created as a professional body under the aegis of DIPP to take forward the implementation of the National IPR Policy that was approved by the Government in May 2016, with the slogan – “Creative India; Innovative India”.
- **Functions:** CIPAM is working towards creating public awareness about IPRs in the country, promoting the filing of IPRs through facilitation, providing inventors with a platform to commercialize their IP assets and coordinating the implementation of the National IPR Policy in collaboration with Government Ministries/Departments and other stakeholders.

Prepaid payment instruments

- **Background:** As per RBI directions, PPI issuers were required to complete the KYC process by February 28, 2019. PPIs or mobile wallets were mandated by the banking regulator in October 2017 to capture all information required under the know-your-customer (KYC) guidelines by end February.
- **What are PPIs?** Prepaid payment instruments are those which facilitate purchase of goods and services against the value stored on such instruments. Value stored on them is paid by the holder using a medium (cash, debit card, credit card etc).
- **These are generally** issued in the form of smart cards, mobile wallets, paper vouchers, internet accounts/wallets.
- **Prepaid payment instruments (PPIs)** come with a pre-loaded value and in some cases a pre-defined purpose of payment. They facilitate the purchase of goods and services as well as inter-personal remittance transactions such as sending money to a friend or a family member.
- **These payment instruments** are licensed and regulated by the Reserve Bank of India. There are three types of PPIs—closed system PPIs, semi-closed system PPIs and open system PPIs.
- **The most common example** of a closed system PPI is a brand-specific gift card. Such cards, physical or otherwise, can be used only at specific locations, and cannot be used to transfer funds from one account to another.

The dispute between Britain and Mauritius over Chagos islands

- **The UK Foreign Office** said: “This is an advisory opinion, not a judgment.”
- **What’s the issue?** Britain detached the Chagos Islands from Mauritius in 1965, three years before Mauritian independence. From 1967 to 1973, some 1,500 Chagos islanders were gradually forced to leave their homes so that the largest island, Diego Garcia, could be leased to the US for a strategic airbase. Today, Diego Garcia hosts a major US military base.
- **In 2016, after** several judicial challenges, Britain extended Diego Garcia’s lease until 2036 and declared that the expelled islanders would not be allowed to go back. In 2017, Mauritius successfully petitioned the United Nations to seek an ICJ advisory opinion on the legality of the separation.
- **Mauritius** claims it was forced to give up the islands – now a British overseas territory – in 1965 in exchange for independence, which it gained in 1968.
- **Arguments by Mauritius:** Mauritius argues it was illegal for Britain to break up its territory. It claims sovereignty over the archipelago and demands the right to resettle former residents.
- **The crux of the Mauritian** claim is the right of self-determination. In its submission to the court, the Mauritian government claimed that the separation of the islands from Mauritius was in clear breach of UN resolution 1514, also known as the Colonial Declaration. Passed in 1960, it enshrined the right of self-determination for colonial peoples and specifically banned the breakup of colonies prior to independence. This was intended to keep borders stable, and to prevent colonial powers from simply absorbing colonial territory into their overseas territory so as to retain their sovereignty.
- **Yet in spite of this resolution,** a number of states (including France and the UK) kept possession of parts of their former colonies following the decolonisation process.

- **Implications of this judgment:** While ICJ advisory opinions are not binding, the ramifications of the opinion will be highly significant; an opinion in favour of Mauritius may strengthen their position in any future negotiations, as well as putting significant international pressure on the UK over the status of the territory.
- **But what could** be particularly critical is the decision's impact on far broader issues of post-colonial sovereignty, and the legitimacy of colonial era independence arrangements.

Nine new items added to MSP for minor forest produce scheme

- **The nine new items are:** Bakul (dried bark), Kutaj (dried bark), Noni/Aal (dried fruits), Sonapatha/Syonak pods, Chanothi seeds, Kalihari (dried tubers), Makoi (dried fruits), Apang plant and Sugandhrnantri roots/tubers.
- **About MSP for MFP scheme:** The MSP for MFP scheme was started by the Centre in 2013 to ensure fair and remunerative prices to MFP gatherers. The total outlay for the scheme is Rs 967 crore as Centre's share for the planned period (2013-14 to 2016-17).
- **The scheme** is designed as a social safety net for improvement of livelihood of MFP gatherers by providing them fair price for the MFPs they collect. The scheme has been started with the objective of providing fair price to MFP gatherers, enhance their income level and ensure sustainable harvesting of MFPs. The MSP scheme seeks assurance of buying at a particular price, primary processing, storage, transportation etc while ensuring sustainability of the resource base.
- **Implementation of the scheme:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India is the Nodal Ministry for implementation of the scheme which will announce Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the selected MFPs with the technical support from TRIFED.
- **TRIFED** will act as the Central Nodal Agency for implementation and monitoring of the scheme through State level implementing agencies. State designated agencies will undertake procurement of notified MFPs directly from MFP gatherers (individual or collectives) at haats notified procurement centers at grass root level at prefixed Minimum Support Price and ensure full & timely on the spot payment to MFP gatherers.
- **Significance of MFP:** Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a major source of livelihood for tribals who belong to the poorest of the poor section of society. The importance of MFPs for this section of the society can be gauged from the fact that majority of 100 million tribals depend on MFPs for food, fodder, shelter, medicines and cash income.
- **It provides** them critical subsistence during the lean seasons, particularly for primitive tribal groups such as hunter gatherers, and the landless. Tribals derive 20-40% of their annual income from MFP on which they spend major portion of their time.
- **This activity** has strong linkage to women's financial empowerment as most of the MFPs are collected and used / sold by women. MFP sector has the potential to create about 10 million workdays jobs annually in the country.

NASA New Horizons

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

Wide Field InfraRed Survey Telescope

- **About WFIRST:** WFIRST, the Wide Field InfraRed Survey Telescope, is a NASA observatory designed to settle essential questions in the areas of dark energy, exoplanets, and infrared astrophysics.
- **WFIRST** will have two instruments, the Wide Field Instrument, and the Coronagraph Instrument. The Wide Field Instrument will have a field of view that is 100 times greater than the Hubble infrared instrument, capturing more of the sky with less observing time. As the primary instrument, the Wide Field Instrument will measure light from a billion galaxies over the course of the mission lifetime.
- **WFIRST will** use gravitational microlensing in its search for new planets. Gravitational microlensing is a technique that relies on the gravity of stars and planets to bend and magnify the light coming from stars that pass behind them from the telescope's viewpoint.
- **Why WFIRST?** With the 2.4 meter telescope, single WFIRST images will uncover millions of galaxies. For example, where Hubble has found only a few galaxies within 500 million years of the Big Bang, WFIRST will find hundreds of these rare objects. In addition, the WFIRST coronagraph instrument will directly image ice and gas giant exoplanets.

UPSC = Fever



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Shri Dharmendra Pradhan hands over 100th Letter of Intent under SATAT scheme Posted On: 27 FEB 2019 6:47PM by PIB Delhi

- **Minister of Petroleum** and Natural Gas & Skill development and Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan today handed over the 100th Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Compressed Bio-Gas(CBG) Entrepreneur (producer) under the SATAT scheme. SATAT is an initiative aimed at providing a Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation as a developmental effort that would benefit both vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs.
- **Speaking on the occasion**, Shri Pradhan hailed the occasion as a breakthrough in realizing the vision of a clean and green India as envisaged by the Government of India. He also reiterated that spreading the gas grid fed by CBG from thousands of such plants across the country would significantly reduce India's import burden and provide an economical and environment-friendly alternative to conventional petroleum fuels.
- **Shri Pradhan** said that it is a waste to wealth venture. He said that the scheme is lucrative for the prospective entrepreneurs, as it provides guaranteed rate of return, assured take-off by Oil marketing companies, there is availability of abundant raw material, and with no condition of any technology.
- **The Minister** said that the banks are ready to provide support to such projects due to their good viability. The Government is in talks with the UN environment Fund and Japanese Government for providing soft loans for such projects. The Minister said that CGD system will be available in 400 districts, providing ready market for the Compressed Bio-gas.
- **Lauding the efforts** of PSUs involved in the project, he said that within 5 months of its launch, over 100 LOIs have been issued. He expressed the hope that within a short period, thousands of such plants will be operational in the country, providing employment, reducing import dependence, helping in garbage management, and also enhancing the income of farmers.
- **SATAT was launched** with a four-pronged agenda of utilising more than 62 million metric tonnes of waste generated every year in India, cutting down import dependence, supplementing job creation in the country and reducing vehicular emissions and pollution from burning of agricultural / organic waste.
- **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 90%.
- **Compressed Bio-Gas** is exactly similar to the commercially available natural gas in its composition and energy potential. CBG can be used as an alternative, renewable automotive fuel. Given the abundance of biomass in the country, CBG has the potential to replace CNG in automotive, industrial and commercial uses in the coming years.
- **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** 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.

Heat Wave

- **This workshop** aims to sensitise the States to the need of preparing and implementing specific Heat Action Plans. Some of the most vulnerable States, which have done a commendable job in mitigating the impact of heat waves, will share their experiences and best practices to help other stakeholders draw lessons.

- **India's concerns:** The Lancet Countdown 2018 report has asked the Indian policy makers to take a series of initiatives to mitigate the increased risks to health, and the loss of labour hours due to a surge in exposure to heatwave events in the country over the 2012-2016 period.
- **Why is India more vulnerable?** From 2014-2017, the average length of heatwaves in India ranged from 3-4 days compared to the global average of 0.8-1.8 days, and Indians were exposed to almost 60 million heatwave exposure events in 2016, a jump of about 40 million from 2012.
- **A recent report** has placed India amongst the countries who most experience high social and economic costs from climate change. Overall, across sectors India lost almost 75,000 million hours of labour in 2017, from about 43,000 million hours in 2000. The agriculture sector was more vulnerable compared to the industrial and service sectors because workers there were more likely to be exposed to heat.
- **The India Meteorological Department** had reported that from 1901 to 2007, there was an increase of more than 0.5°C in mean temperature, with considerable geographic variation, and climate forecasts by research groups project a 2.2-5.5°C rise in temperatures in northern, central and western India by the end of the 21st century.
- **What is a heatwave?** Heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains, 37°C or more for coastal stations and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions.
- **Following criteria are used to declare heat wave:** Based on Departure from Normal: Heat Wave: Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C. Severe Heat Wave: Departure from normal is >6.4°C.
- **Based on Actual Maximum Temperature (for plains only):** Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature $\geq 45^\circ\text{C}$. Severe Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature $\geq 47^\circ\text{C}$. To declare heat wave, the above criteria should be met at least in 2 stations in a Meteorological sub-division for at least two consecutive days and it will be declared on the second day.
- **Health Impacts of Heat Waves:** The health impacts of Heat Waves typically involve dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke. Children, the elderly and those with pre-existing morbidities are particularly vulnerable.
- **Vegetable vendors, cab drivers, construction workers, police personnel, road side kiosk operators and mostly weaker sections of the society** have to work in the extreme heat to make their ends meet and are extremely vulnerable to the adverse impacts of heat waves such as dehydration, heat and sun strokes.
- **Reasons why India is experiencing more heat waves are:** Magnified effect of paved and concrete surfaces in urban areas and a lack of tree cover.
- **Urban heat island effects** can make ambient temperatures feel 3 to 4 degrees more than what they are. More heat waves were expected as globally temperatures had risen by an average 0.8 degrees in the past 100 years. Night-time temperatures are rising too. Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becoming increasingly frequent globally due to climate change.
- **High intensity** of UV rays in medium-high heat wave zone. Combination of exceptional heat stress and a predominantly rural population makes India vulnerable to heat waves.
- **Way ahead for India- How India should deal with heat waves?** Identifying heat hot-spots through appropriate tracking of meteorological data and promoting timely development and implementation of local Heat Action Plans with strategic inter-agency co-ordination, and a response which targets the most vulnerable groups.
- **Review of existing occupational health standards,** labour laws and sectoral regulations for worker safety in relation to climatic conditions. Policy intervention and coordination across three sectors health, water and power is necessary.
- **Expedite the rollout** of the National Action Plan on Climate Change and Health. Preventing temperature-related morbidity and mortality could be a key programme under this mission. Ensure an adequate supply of water. Timely access to drinking water can help mitigate this escalation.
- **Further research** using sub-district level data to provide separate indices for urban and rural areas to enable more targeted geographical interventions. Provision of public messaging (radio, TV), mobile phone-based text messages, automated phone calls and alerts. Promotion of traditional adaptation practices, such as staying indoors and wearing comfortable clothes.
- **Popularisation of simple design** features such as shaded windows, underground water storage tanks and insulating housing materials. Advance implementation of local Heat Action Plans, plus effective inter-agency coordination is a vital response which the government can deploy in order to protect vulnerable groups.

Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air missiles (QRSAM)

- **About QRSAM:** It has been developed to replace the 'Akash' missile defence system, and has 360-degree coverage.

- **It uses solid fuel propellant** and has a strike range of 25-30 km with capability of hitting multiple targets. It is capable of hitting the low flying objects.

Warming imperils clouds that deter 'hothouse' conditions

- **Concerns highlighted by the study:** Stratocumulus clouds cover about 20% of subtropical oceans, mostly near western seaboard such as the coasts of California, Mexico and Peru. When they disappear, Earth warms dramatically, by about eight degrees Celsius — in addition to the global warming that comes from enhanced greenhouse concentrations alone.
- **A temperature** increase of that magnitude would melt polar ice and lift sea levels tens of metres. The last time the planet was that hot, some 50 million years ago during the Eocene Epoch, crocodiles roamed the Arctic. Even half that much warming would overwhelm humanity's capacity to adapt.
- **What are stratocumulus clouds?** Stratocumulus clouds are low-level clumps or patches of cloud varying in colour from bright white to dark grey. They are the most common clouds on earth recognised by their well-defined bases with some parts often darker than others. They usually have gaps between them, but they can also be joined together.
- **How do stratocumulus clouds form?** Stratocumulus clouds usually form from a layer of stratus cloud breaking up. They are indicators of a change in the weather and are usually present near a warm, cold or occluded front.
- **What weather is associated with stratocumulus clouds?** Stratocumulus clouds can be present in all types of weather conditions, from dry settled weather to more rainy conditions, but they themselves are often not the culprit. Stratocumulus are often mistaken for rain clouds, when in reality it is quite rare to get anything more than the lightest drizzle from them, if anything at all.

UN Women

- **Background:** The Odisha Assembly, in November 2018, passed a resolution by unanimous voice vote for providing 33% reservation for women in Legislative Assemblies and Parliament. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had initiated discussion on the motion.
- **About UN Women:** The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: UN Women is the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
- **It merges and builds** on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment: Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI). United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).
- **The main roles of UN Women are:** To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms. To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society. To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

Banks may set repo rate as benchmark for lending

- **Current scenario:** The marginal cost of fund based lending rate (MCLR) is currently the benchmark for all loan rates. Banks typically add a spread to the MCLR while pricing loans for homes and automobiles.
- **Why repo?** The RBI has mandated that the spread over the benchmark rate to be decided by banks at the inception of the loan should remain unchanged through the life of the loan. It should remain unchanged unless the borrower's credit assessment undergoes a substantial change and as agreed upon in the loan contract.

- **If the lending rates** are linked to the repo rate, any change in the repo rate will immediately impact the home and auto loan rates, since RBI has mandated the spread to remain fixed over the life of the loan.
- **Benefits of setting Repo Rate as benchmark for lending:** It will make the system more transparent since every borrower will know the fixed interest rate and the spread value decided by the bank. It will help borrowers compare loans in a better way from different banks. There shall be standardisation and ease of understanding for the borrowers. This would mean that same bank cannot adopt multiple benchmarks within a loan category.
- **What is Repo Rate?** Repo stands for 'Repurchasing Option'. It refers to the rate at which commercial banks borrow money from the RBI in case of shortage of funds. It is one of the main tools of RBI to keep inflation under control.
- **What is MCLR?** The Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR) system was introduced by the Reserve Bank to provide loans on minimal rates as well as market rate fluctuation benefit to customers. This system has modified the existing base rate system of providing home loans. In this system, banks have to set various benchmark rates for specific time periods starting from an overnight to one month, quarterly, semi-annually and annually.
- **MCLR replaced** the earlier base rate system to determine the lending rates for commercial banks. RBI implemented it on 1 April 2016 to determine rates of interests for loans.
- **MCLR aims:** To improve the transmission of policy rates into the lending rates of banks. To bring transparency in the methodology followed by banks for determining interest rates on advances.
- **To ensure availability** of bank credit at interest rates which are fair to borrowers as well as banks. To enable banks to become more competitive and enhance their long run value and contribution to economic growth.

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

- **Objectives:** The resolution denounced the proposed Bill stating that it cannot be implemented in Nagaland as it will impact the "unique history and status of the Nagas under the Constitution".
- **The resolution** also expressed solidarity with the States and communities of the Northeast in opposing the Bill, as it has the potential of "changing the demographic profile, which will be against the interest of indigenous tribes and can divest them of their constitutionally guaranteed political, cultural and economic rights".
- **WHAT IS THE CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL 2016?** The Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016 seeks to allow illegal migrants from certain minority communities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan eligible for Indian citizenship. In other words, it amends the Citizenship Act of 1955. The Bill provides that the registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may be cancelled if they violate any law.
- **WHAT DOES IT WANT?** The Citizenship Amendment Bill seeks to allow illegal migrants belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian religious communities coming from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan to not be imprisoned or deported.
- **It also appeals** for the minimum years of residency in India to apply for citizenship to be lessened from at least 11 to six years for such migrants. The Bill, however, does not extend to illegal Muslim migrants. It also does not talk about other minority communities in the three neighbouring countries, such as Jews, Bahais etc.
- **Critics Views of Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2016:** Critics say it violates the basic tenets of the Constitution. Here, illegal immigrants are distinguished on the basis of religion. It goes against the fundamental right to equality under Article 14. Article 14 applies equally to both citizens and foreigners.
- **What is the Citizenship Act 1995?** Under Article 9 of the Indian Constitution, a person who voluntarily acquires citizenship of any other country is no longer an Indian citizen. Citizenship by descent: Persons born outside India on or after January 26, 1950, but before December 10, 1992, are citizens of India by descent if their father was a citizen of India at the time of their birth.
- **From December 3, 2004,** onwards, persons born outside of India shall not be considered citizens of India unless their birth is registered at an Indian consulate within one year of the date of birth. In Section 8 of the Citizenship Act 1955, if an adult makes a declaration of renunciation of Indian citizenship, he loses Indian citizenship.
- **Who is an illegal immigrant?** According to the Citizenship Act (1955), an illegal immigrant is defined as a person who enters India without a valid passport or stays in the country after the expiry of the visa permit. Also, the immigrant who uses false documents for the immigration process.
- **What are the guidelines to become an Indian citizenship?** Citizenship is granted to an individual by the government of the country when he/she complies with the legal formalities, so it's like a judicial concept.
- **In India, the Citizenship Act, 1995 prescribes five ways of acquiring citizenship:** Birth Descent Registration Naturalization Incorporation of the territory.

PCA framework

- **There are another** six banks that are still under PCA framework.
- **What is PCA?** PCA norms allow the regulator to place certain restrictions such as halting branch expansion and stopping dividend payment. It can even cap a bank's lending limit to one entity or sector. Other corrective action that can be imposed on banks include special audit, restructuring operations and activation of recovery plan. Banks' promoters can be asked to bring in new management, too. The RBI can also supersede the bank's board, under PCA.
- **When is PCA invoked?** The PCA is invoked when certain risk thresholds are breached. There are three risk thresholds which are based on certain levels of asset quality, profitability, capital and the like. The third such threshold, which is maximum tolerance limit, sets net NPA at over 12% and negative return on assets for four consecutive years.
- **What are the types of restrictions?** There are two type of restrictions, mandatory and discretionary. Restrictions on dividend, branch expansion, directors compensation, are mandatory while discretionary restrictions could include curbs on lending and deposit.
- **What will a bank do if PCA is triggered?** Banks are not allowed to re new or access costly deposits or take steps to increase their fee-based income. Banks will also have to launch a special drive to reduce the stock of NPAs and contain generation of fresh NPAs. They will also not be allowed to enter into new lines of business. RBI will also impose restrictions on the bank on borrowings from interbank market.
- **Impact:** Small and medium enterprises will have to bear the brunt due to this move by RBI. Since the PCA framework restricts the amount of loans banks can extend, this will definitely put pressure on credit being made available to companies especially the MSMEs.
- **Large companies** have access to the corporate bond market so they may not be impacted immediately. It has been predicted that if more state-owned banks are brought under PCA, it will impact the credit availability for the MSME segment.

World's largest Bhagavad Gita:

- **Context:** The Prime Minister recently inaugurated the world's largest and heaviest Bhagavad Gita at the Delhi ISKCON temple.
- **Key facts:** The book measures 2.8 meters by 2 meters and has 670 pages and weights at 800 kg.
- **It is also the world's largest sacred book.** The book has been printed in Milan, Italy, on YUPO synthetic paper so as to make it untearable and waterproof. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), known colloquially as the Hare Krishna movement, is a worldwide confederation of more than 400 temples and runs 100 vegetarian restaurants and a wide variety of community-serving projects.

In News- 'riceXpert':

- **The ICAR-NRRI** 'ricexpert' App provides information to farmers in real time on insect pests, nutrients, weeds, nematodes and disease-related problems, rice varieties for different ecologies, farm implements for different field and post-harvest operations.
- **It is a web-based** application systems which facilitates flow of information from the farmer to the farm scientist and get their instant solution. Farmers can use this App as a diagnostic tool in their rice fields and make customize queries for quick solution of their problems by sending text, photo and recorded voice and solution received through SMS.

Exercise Sampriti – 2019:

- **Context:** As part of the ongoing India Bangladesh defence cooperation, a joint military exercise Sampriti-2019 will be conducted at Tangail, Bangladesh.
- **Exercise Sampriti-2019** is an important bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and Bangladesh and this will be the eighth edition of the exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.
- **The exercise** is aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies. The exercise will involve tactical level operations in a counter insurgency and counter terrorism environment under the UN mandate.

'Delhi Declaration' on digital health:

- **Delhi Declaration** on digital health was adopted at the concluding session of the '4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit. It calls for WHO's leadership in digital health and for it to establish a specific mechanism to centrally coordinate digital health to assist its Member States.

Good jobs, not Universal Basic Income, are needed for a good society:

- **Summary:** The editorial discusses about the need for creation of good jobs, why UBI cannot be a panacea? Concerns associated.
- **Why UBI cannot be a panacea for unemployment related problems?** UBI and its many variants—quasi-UBI and income supplements for targeted groups—treat only the symptoms of the disease. The root cause of the disease is that many people do not have work that provides adequate incomes. UBI leads to dependency, unfulfillment, depression and marginalization.
- **What is a good Job?** A good job implies a contract between the worker and society. The worker provides the economy with the services it needs. In return, society and government must create conditions whereby workers are treated with dignity and can earn adequate incomes.
- **Good jobs** require good contracts between workers and their “employers”. Employers are those who benefit from the services workers provide the enterprise, even if they are not legally classified as “employers”.
- **Need of the hour:** Economists and policymakers must go to fundamental principles: “Fairness” for workers must be a stronger principle than “flexibility” for employers. Reduce the number of labour regulations but be very firm about the essential regulations to ensure good incomes and good working conditions.
- **Tax incentives** should be directed towards hiring of less-skilled workers, rather than attracting more capital investments that displace workers, so that people at the bottom of the pyramid can step on to the formal escalator for upward mobility in society.
- **Conclusion:** Policymakers must focus on the reforms required in the economy to produce good jobs to provide good incomes by doing good work.



Cabinet approves Pradhan Mantri KisanSAMmanNidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme Posted On: 28 FEB 2019 10:49PM by PIB Delhi

- **The Union Cabinet**, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved a new Central Sector Scheme, namely, the Pradhan Mantri KisanSAMmanNidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme, seeking to provide income support to all Small and Marginal landholder farmers' families with cultivable land holding upto 2 hectare across the country, by way of payment of Rs.6000/- per year, subject to certain exclusions, has been launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on the 24th February, 2019.
- **The amount** is being released in three 4-monthly installments of Rs.2000 /- each over the year, to be credited into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries held in destination banks through Direct Benefit Transfer mode. A total amount of more than Rs.2000 crores has already been released to more than one crore farmers' families across the country in the first lot of 1st installment. Further releases for the 1st installment to the remaining beneficiaries are being made.
- **The 2nd instalment** under the scheme would be admissible after the 1st of April, 2019. In this connection, it is stated that the Union Cabinet, while approving the scheme on 1.2.2019, made Aadhaar seeding of the beneficiaries' data compulsory for release of 2nd installment onwards. However, it would be difficult to get 100% Aadhaar seeding for release of funds for 2nd installment, as efficient seeding of beneficiaries' details with Aadhaar requires bio-metric authentication.
- **Demographic seeding** will result in large scale rejection as the spellings of names have to be exactly the same. Non-seeding of beneficiaries' details with Aadhaar number will delay the release of 2nd installment as it is due on 1st April, 2019 and will cause discontent among the farmers. Therefore, this condition has been relaxed. The condition will remain applicable for release of 3rd installment onwards. However, Aadhaar number shall be compulsory for release of 2nd installment. The Government will take adequate measures to validate the data before payment is made.

Cabinet approves National Policy on Software Products - 2019 Posted On: 28 FEB 2019 10:36PM by PIB Delhi

- **The Union Cabinet**, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the National Policy on Software Products - 2019 to develop India as a Software Product Nation.
- **Major impact** The Software product ecosystem is characterized by innovations, Intellectual Property (IP) creation and large value addition increase in productivity, which has the potential to significantly boost revenues and exports in the sector, create substantive employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in emerging technologies and leverage opportunities available under the Digital India Programme, thus, leading to a boost in inclusive and sustainable growth.
- **Expenditure involved** Initially, an outlay of Rs.1500 Crore is involved to implement the programmes/ schemes envisaged under this policy over the period of 7 years. Rs1500 Crore is divided into Software Product Development Fund (SPDF) and Research & Innovation fund.
- **Implementation strategy and targets** The Policy will lead to the formulation of several schemes, initiatives, projects and measures for the development of Software products sector in the country as per the roadmap envisaged therein. To achieve the vision of NPSP-2019, the Policy has the following five Missions: To promote the creation of a sustainable Indian software product industry, driven by intellectual property (IP), leading to a ten-fold increase in India share of the Global Software product market by 2025.
- **To nurture 10,000 technology** startups in software product industry, including 1000 such technology startups in Tier-II and Tier-III towns & cities and generating direct and in-direct employment for 3.5 million people by 2025. To create a talent pool for software product industry through (i) up-skilling of 1,000,000 IT professionals, (ii) motivating 100,000 school and college students and (iii) generating 10,000 specialized professionals that can provide leadership.
- **IV. To build** a cluster-based innovation driven ecosystem by developing 20 sectoral and strategically located software product development clusters having integrated ICT infrastructure, marketing, incubation, R&D/testbeds and mentoring support.

- **In order to evolve** and monitor scheme & programmes for the implementation of this policy, National Software Products Mission will be set up with participation from Government, Academia and Industry.
- **Background:** The Indian IT Industry has predominantly been a service Industry. However, a need has been felt to move up the value chain through technology oriented products and services. To create a robust software product ecosystem the Government has approved the National Policy on Software Products - 2019, which aims to develop India as the global software product hub, driven by innovation, improved commercialisation, sustainable Intellectual Property (IP), promoting technology start-ups and specialized skill sets. Further, the Policy aims to align with other Government initiatives such as Start-up India, Make in India and Digital India, Skill India etc so as to create Indian Software products Industry of USD ~70-80 billion with direct & indirect employment of ~3.5 million by 2025.

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)

- **Key facts:** As per MoU, Adobe shall be adopting 100 schools under Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) initiative. Adobe shall be implementing its Digital Disha Program in ATLs, under which free licenses of Adobe Spark premium shall be offered to ATLs. Launched in 2018, the Adobe Digital Disha Programme is aimed at driving synergies in creative thinking and technology-based learning.
- **What are ATLs?** With a vision to 'Cultivate one Million children in India as Neoteric Innovators', Atal Innovation Mission is establishing Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) in schools across India.
- **Objective:** The objective of this scheme is to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds; and inculcate skills such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing etc.
- **Financial Support:** AIM will provide grant-in-aid that includes a one-time establishment cost of Rs. 10 lakh and operational expenses of Rs. 10 lakh for a maximum period of 5 years to each ATL. Eligibility: Schools (minimum Grade VI – X) managed by Government, local body or private trusts/society can set up ATL.
- **Significance of ATLs:** Atal Tinkering Labs have evolved as epicenters for imparting these 'skills of the future' through practical applications based on self-learning. Bridging a crucial social divide, Atal Tinkering Labs provide equal opportunity to all children across the spectrum by working at the grassroots level, introducing children to the world of innovation and tinkering.
- **Need for such labs:** As the world grapples with evolving technologies, a new set of skills have gained popular acceptance and have come to be in high demand. For India to contribute significantly during this age of rapid technological advancement, there is an urgent need to empower our youth with these 'skills of the future'.
- **Equipped with modern technologies** to help navigate and impart crucial skills in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the ATLs are at the vanguard of the promoting scientific temper and an entrepreneurial spirit in children today.
- **About AIM:** The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.
- **AIM is mandated** to create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country and revolutionizing the innovation eco-system – touching upon the entire innovation life cycle through various programs.
- **The Atal Innovation Mission shall have two core functions:** Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs. Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.

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. 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.
- **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.

Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS)

- **What is it?** SHREYAS is a programme basket comprising the initiatives of three Central Ministries, namely the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Labour & Employment viz the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), the National Career Service (NCS) and introduction of BA/BSc/BCom (Professional) courses in the higher educational institutions.
- **SHREYAS is a** programme conceived for students in degree courses, primarily non-technical, with a view to introduce employable skills into their learning, promote apprenticeship as integral to education and also amalgamate employment facilitating efforts of the Government into the education system so that clear pathways towards employment opportunities are available to students during and after their graduation.
- **Aim:** To enhance the employability of Indian youth by providing 'on the job work exposure' and earning of stipend. Target: In all the tracks together, it is proposed to cover 50 lakh students by 2022.
- **Following are the objectives of SHREYAS:** To improve employability of students by introducing employment relevance into the learning process of the higher education system. To forge a close functional link between education and industry/service sectors on a sustainable basis.
- **To provide** skills which are in demand, to the students in a dynamic manner. To establish an 'earn while you learn' system into higher education. To help business/industry in securing good quality manpower. To link student community with employment facilitating efforts of the Government.
- **Operation of the Scheme:** The primary scheme will be operated in conjunction with National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) which provides for placing of apprentices upto 10% of the total work force in every business/industry.
- **The scheme** will be implemented by the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), initially the Banking Finance Insurance Services (BFIS), Retail, Health care, Telecom, Logistics, Media, Management services, IT&S and Apparel. More sectors would be added over time with emerging apprenticeship demand and curriculum adjustments.
- **Significance of the scheme:** Education with skills is the need of the hour and the SHREYAS will be a major effort in this direction to make degree students more skilled, capable, employable and aligned to the needs of our economy so that they contribute to country's progress and also obtain gainful employment.

“Yuva Sahakar-Cooperative Enterprise Support and Innovation Scheme”

- **Key features of the scheme:** The scheme would encourage cooperatives to venture into new and innovative areas.
- **NCDC has** created a dedicated fund with liberal features enabling youth to avail the scheme. The scheme will be linked to Rs 1000 crore 'Cooperative Start-up and Innovation Fund (CSIF)' created by the NCDC. It would have more incentives for cooperatives of North Eastern region, Aspirational Districts and cooperatives with women or SC or ST or PwD members.
- **The funding** for the project will be up to 80% of the project cost for these special categories as against 70% for others. The scheme envisages 2% less than the applicable rate of interest on term loan for the project cost up to Rs 3 crore including 2 years moratorium on payment of principal. All types of cooperatives in operation for at least one year are eligible.
- **About NCDC:** National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1963 as a statutory Corporation under Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare. It has many regional centres to provide the financial assistance to Cooperatives/Societies/Federations.

Inclusive Internet Index 2019

- **About the Inclusive Internet Index:** The Inclusive Internet Index, commissioned by Facebook and conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit, seeks to measure the extent to which the Internet is not only accessible and affordable, but also relevant to all, allowing usage that enables positive social and economic outcomes at individual and group level.
- **The aim** of the Inclusive Internet Index is to provide researchers and policymakers with the information they need to enable the beneficial use of the Internet, irrespective of age, gender, location or background.
- **The index** assesses the performance of 100 countries in four categories of inclusion: Accessibility, Affordability, Relevance and Readiness. Each category incorporates key indicators of internet inclusion, including quantitative measures such as network coverage and pricing, and qualitative measures such as the presence of e-inclusion policies and the availability of local-language content.
- **Key findings:** The digital divide appears to be widening at the bottom of the income pyramid, risking a reversal of past progress. Gender gaps in Internet access continue to narrow globally, led by low and lower middle-income countries.
- **Concerns** about online privacy remain high, and trust in information from governments on the Internet has retreated in the West. Men have more Internet access than women globally but low and lower middle income countries narrowed the gender gap in 2018.
- **Inclusion** for women and those with disabilities have improved, with low income and lower-middle-income countries driving the progress.
- **Performance of various countries:** Sweden has topped the rankings followed by Singapore and the US. India has been ranked 47th. The UK, Namibia, Ireland, Austria, Chile and South Africa are the top performers of the year in terms of gender equality. All these countries had female digital skills training plans.

National Science Day 2018

- **For his great success** in the field of science in India, Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman was awarded and honored with the Nobel Prize in the Physics in the year 1930. Theme: "Science for the People and the People for Science."
- **What is Raman effect?** The Raman Effect is a change in the wavelength of light that occurs when a light beam is deflected by molecules. When a beam of light traverses a dust-free, transparent sample of a chemical compound, a small fraction of the light emerges in directions other than that of the incident (incoming) beam. Most of this scattered light is of unchanged wavelength. A small part, however, has wavelengths different from that of the incident light; its presence is a result of the Raman effect.
- **Raman's experiment:** The violet light of the solar spectrum is isolated with a violet filter and passed through the liquid sample. Most of the light emerging from the liquid sample is the same color as the incident violet beam: the so-called Rayleigh scattered light (the scattering of light by particles in a medium, without change in wavelength. It accounts, for example, for the blue colour of the sky, since blue light is scattered slightly more efficiently than red).
- **However,** Raman, along with K S Krishnan was able to show that some of the scattered light was a different color, which they could isolate by using a green filter placed between the observer and the sample.

Parents Responsibility and Norms for Accountability and Monitoring (PRANAM) Bill

- **The Parents Responsibility and Norms for Accountability and Monitoring (PRANAM) Bill**, stated to be the first-of its-kind Bill in the country, is an effort to protect elderly parents of government employees in their times of need. Objective of the bill: To ensure that no state government employee ignores their elderly parents and unmarried differently-abled siblings.
- **Key Features:** The PRANAM Bill makes it mandatory for the state government employees to look after their parents and unmarried differently-abled siblings who do not have their own sources of income.
- **Under the bill's provisions**, if the PRANAM Commission gets a complaint that parents of a state government employee are being ignored, then 10 or 15 per cent of the employee's salary will be deducted by the government and paid to the parents or differently-abled siblings.
- **The employees** of private companies and the central government working in the state would also be covered by the bill at a later stage.

China drafts new rules to supervise biotechnology research

- **Highlights of the draft:** It proposes fines and bans against rogue scientists. It proposes to classify technology used for extracting genetic materials, gene editing, gene transfer and stem cell research as "high risk".
- **Scientists** can be fined 10 to 20 times the amount of "illegal income" earned from unauthorised research and be banned from their field of work for six months to one year. If the circumstances are serious, their medical practice licence shall be revoked and the individual shall not engage in clinical research for life.
- **What necessitated this?** Recently a Chinese researcher caused a global outcry by claiming that he gene-edited babies.
- **He announced** in November that the world's first gene-edited babies — twin girls — were born that same month after he altered their DNA to prevent them from contracting HIV by deleting a certain gene under a technique known as CRISPR. The claim shocked scientists worldwide, raising questions about bioethics and putting a spotlight on China's lax oversight of scientific research.

2nd Edition of ISL Dictionary:

- **Context:** '2nd Edition of ISL Dictionary' for Hearing Impaired Persons has been launched. The Dictionary Includes 6000 Words Under Categories of Academic, Legal, Medical, Technical & Everyday Terms.
- **Key facts:** The dictionary has been developed by Indian Sign Language Research & Training Centre (ISLR&TC) under Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), M/o Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **Its aim** is to give Deaf people the constitutional right to speech and opportunity of freedom of expression and also bringing them into the main stream of the society.

"South Coast Railway (SCoR)"- a new Zone of Indian Railways:

- **Context:** Creation of a new zone with headquarter at Visakhapatnam.
- **Key facts:** The new zone named "South Coast Railway (SCoR)", will comprise of existing Guntakal, Guntur and Vijayawada divisions. South Central Railway will comprise of Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Nanded divisions.

Technology Support and Outreach (TECH-SOP):

- **What is it?** TECH – SOP is an initiative of the MSME Ministry to bridge the gap between research and development institutions and MSMEs so that they can use latest technologies and become a part of global value chain.

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.

India's first indigenous semiconductor chips for 4G/LTE and 5G NR modems:

- **Context:** India's first Indigenous Semiconductor Chips by Bengaluru based semiconductor company "SIGNALCHIP" for 4G/LTE and 5G NR MODEMs was recently unveiled.
- **Significance:** With this, India has entered into the elite club of the world and this will have huge implications for India's data security and data sovereignty, besides the positive economic implications. At present only 8 companies and a few countries can design and build semiconductor chips.

Aarohan Social Innovation Awards:

- **Context:** The Infosys Foundation has constituted Aarohan Social Innovation Awards to reward individuals, teams or NGOs developing solutions for the social sector.
- **About Aarohan Social Innovation Awards:** Aim: To nurture the culture of innovation in the social sector to scale positive change across the country and thereby provide a platform to help the solutions scale.
- **The awards** would be given away in six categories spanning healthcare, destitute care, rural development, women's safety and empowerment, education and sport and sustainability.

Geneva Convention: How will it help India bring back captured IAF Pilot?

- **Context:** An Indian pilot was captured by Pakistan after a major aerial confrontation and chase between Pakistan Air Force planes, which dropped bombs in four locations of Jammu and Kashmir, and Indian Air Force jets that countered them over the Line of Control (LoC).
- **New Delhi** has conveyed to Islamabad that “no harm” should come to the pilot. India has also cited the Geneva Conventions while demanding the release of Wing Commander in Pak custody.
- **What is the Geneva Convention?** The 1949 Geneva Conventions are a set of international treaties that ensure that warring parties conduct themselves in a humane way with non-combatants such as civilians and medical personnel, as well as with combatants no longer actively engaged in fighting, such as prisoners of war, and wounded or sick soldiers. All countries are signatories to the Geneva Conventions. There are four conventions, with three protocols added on since 1949.
- **Does the captured pilot count as a prisoner of war?** The provisions of the conventions apply in peacetime situations, in declared wars, and in conflicts that are not recognised as war by one or more of the parties. India has said its airstrikes were a “non-military” intelligence-led operation and therefore both sides are bound by the Geneva Conventions. This means the IAF officer is a prisoner of war, and his treatment has to be in accordance with the provisions for PoWs under the Geneva Conventions.
- **What are the provisions for PoWs?** The treatment of prisoners of war is dealt with by the Third Convention or treaty. The Third Convention is unambiguous about how prisoners must be treated: “humanely”. And the responsibility for this lies with the detaining power, not just the individuals who captured the PoW.
- **Any unlawful act** or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention.
- **In particular**, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoner concerned and carried out in his interest.
- **Likewise**, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity. Measures of reprisal against prisoners of war are prohibited,” says Article 13 of the Convention.
- **What rights is a PoW entitled to?** Article 14 of the Convention lays down that PoWs are “entitled to in all circumstances to respect for their persons and their honour”. In captivity, a PoW must not be forced to provide information of any kind under “physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion”. Refusal to answer questions should not invite punishment. A PoW must be protected from exposure to fighting.
- **Use of PoWs** as hostages or human shields is prohibited, and a PoW has to be given the same access to safety and evacuation facilities as those affiliated to the detaining power.
- **Access to health** facilities, prayer, recreation and exercise are also written into the Convention. The detaining power has to facilitate correspondence between the PoW and his family, and must ensure that this is done without delays. A PoW is also entitled to receive books or care packages from the outside world.
- **What do the provisions say about the release of prisoners?** Parties to the conflict “are bound to send back” or repatriate PoWs, regardless of rank, who are seriously wounded or sick, after having cared for them until they are fit to travel”. The conflicting parties are expected to write into any agreement they may reach to end hostilities the expeditious return of PoWs.
- **Previous such instances:** At the end of the 1971 war, India had more than 80,000 Pakistani troops who had surrendered to the Indian Army after the liberation of Dhaka. India agreed to release them under the Shimla Agreement of 1972. Pakistan can decide to send Wing Commander Abhinandan unilaterally, or negotiate his release with India.
- **In such situations, who monitors whether the Geneva Conventions are being followed?** The Geneva Conventions have a system of “Protecting Powers” who ensure that the provisions of the conventions are being followed by the parties in a conflict. In theory, each side must designate states that are not party to the conflict as their “Protecting Powers”. In practice, the International Committee of the Red Cross usually plays this role.