



Year end Review: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways 2018: the Highway Construction Year

- The year 2018-19** was declared by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways as the YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION. This was a year for consolidating the gains that have accrued from major policy decisions taken in the previous four years, a time for monitoring of ongoing projects, tackling road blocks and adding to the already impressive pace of work achieved last year. The Ministry took a decision to complete all ongoing projects that had been awarded upto 2015-16, and placed the highest ever target of constructing at least 12,000 kms of national highways as against 9829 kms achieved during 2017-18, and make special efforts to take this length to 16000 km. Overall, more than about 61,300 km length of road projects, costing more than Rs. 6.48 lakh crore, are in progress at present. The balance ongoing works (which have been awarded, appointed dates declared and works going on at sites) are more than 30,200 kms during the year. In the first nine months of FY 2018-19, 5,759 km has been completed in 18-19 against 4,942 km up to same period in last year.
- In order to achieve this target the Ministry brought in policies, guidelines and practices** for expediting pre-construction activities and bringing in more efficiency and transparency in the process. The Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) was developed to streamline the process of pre-qualification of bidders for contracts on EPC Mode. BhoomiRashi portal is being used extensively for expediting the process of notification for land acquisition. The portal BIMS and BhoomiRashi portals have further been linked with Public Financial Management System (PFMS) to facilitate real time payment to beneficiaries.
- On the finance front too, National Highways Authority of India did a successful financial closure** of its first project under Toll- Operate –Transfer this year and offered 586 km of national highways under the second bundle. The first TOT bundle of 9 projects, totaling approximately 681 KM of roads in two states of Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, was awarded earlier during the year for Rs. 9,681 Crore, which was 1.5 times the Authority's estimate. National Highways Authority of India (NHA) also got an unsecured loan of Rs 25,000 crore from State Bank of India for 10 years with 3 years of moratorium on repayments. This is the largest amount of loan to have been sanctioned to NHA in one stroke by any institution. This is also the largest long term unsecured loan sanctioned by SBI at a time to any entity.
- The year has also seen a lot of movement in the transport sector, with focus on reducing carbon footprint** while enhancing road safety, efficiency and convenience of road users. An MoU signed with 'Transport for London' (TfL) to revamp the public transport system in the country, building mini wayside amenities at toll plazas, establishing a quality – based ranking system for toll plazas, simplification of Driving License application, notifying emission standards for construction equipment vehicles and tractors, issue of guidelines to set up well equipped and competent Driving Training Centres (DTC) at district levels and for granting financial assistance to NGOs for undertaking road safety advocacy, launch of SukhadYatra App and Toll Free Emergency Number, the decision to allow free passage to user in case of malfunctioning of Electronic Toll Collection infrastructure, compensation of Rs. 5,00,000/- to road accident victims, notification regarding blending of gasoline with methanol in order to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions and import burden and linking of vehicle emission data with State/Central Register of Vehicles are all notable initiatives taken by the Ministry in this direction.

CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

- Award / Construction Statistics:** A two days long exercise was conducted to review of over 700 ongoing National Highway projects in the country, and over 300 projects were identified to be completed by 2019 achieving the highest ever construction in financial year 2018-19.
- Progress of Major Programmes/ Landmark Projects: Bharatmala Pariyojana: Phase-I** This is the umbrella program for the highways sector unrolled in 2017-18, that aims to optimize the efficiency of road traffic movement across the country by bridging critical infrastructure gaps. 34,800 km of National Highways are to be constructed under the Phase-I of the programme between 2017-18 to 2021-22 in a phased manner at a cost of Rs. 5,35,000 crore. This includes 5,000 kms of the National Corridors, 9000 kms of Economic Corridors, 6000 km of Feeder Corridors and Inter-Corridors, 2000 kms of Border Roads, 2,000 kms of Coastal Roads and Port Connectivity Roads and 800 kms of Green-field Expressways.
- Projects for 6,407 km road length have been awarded under the Bharatmala Pariyojana** (including residual NHDP) till the end of October this year. DPRs are being prepared for projects for the balance length. De- congestion projects have been completed for 13 out of 191 congestion points identified, and are under progress for de-congestion of 80 other points. In addition, DPRs are being prepared for 93 congestion points. Out of the 35 locations identified for Multimodal Logistics Parks, DPRs have been initiated for 7 locations and availability of land parcels is being confirmed with State Governments for the rest of the locations.

SetuBharatam

- In order to ensure safe and smooth flow of traffic**, Ministry has envisaged a plan for replacement of Level Crossings on National Highways by ROBs/ RUBs under a scheme known as SetuBharatam. Under this programme, out of 174 ROBs/RUBs which are to be constructed, 91 have been sanctioned with an estimated cost of Rs.7,104.72 crore. Out of 91 sanctioned, 59 ROBs/RUBs have been awarded which are in various stages of progress.
- ChardhamMahamargVikasPariyojna** The project envisages development of easy access to the four prominent Dhams, namely, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedranath and Badrinath, situated in the state of Uttarakhand. These four Dhams are prominent pilgrimage centres. The project entails development of 889 km of roads with configuration of two-lane with paved shoulders at an estimated cost of about Rs. 12,000 crore. The projects are being taken up on EPC mode and the programme is targeted for completion by March, 2020.
- Eastern Peripheral Expressway– Western Peripheral Expressway** The two projects of Peripheral Expressways around Delhi, comprising 135 km Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE), and 135 km Western Peripheral Expressway (WPE) connecting NH-1 and NH-2 from Western and Eastern side of Delhi was completed this year and inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister in May 2018 and November 2018 respectively. The EPE was constructed by NHAI and WPE by Haryana Government. The two expressways were envisaged with the twin objectives of decongesting and de-polluting the national capital by diverting the traffic not destined for Delhi.
- The EPE stretches from Kundli** on NH 1 to Palwal on NH 2, and was constructed at a cost of Rs. 4617.87 crore, in addition to Rs. 5900 crore were spent on acquiring 1700 acres of land. It was completed in a record time of about 500 days against the scheduled target of 910 days. It is a fully access-controlled six-lane expressway with a closed tolling system. The expressway has an iconic toll plaza equipped with electronic toll collection infrastructure, ITS control system of the entire EPE and a digital art gallery, with holographic models of major structures and making of the EPE. Weigh-in-Motion equipment at all 30 entry points, solar power on the entire length, eight solar power plants with a capacity of 4000 KW, rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation and 36 replicas of monuments depicting Indian culture and heritage are major features of this expressway. This project has generated employment opportunities of about 50 lakh man-days.
- Delhi-Meerut Expressway** Delhi-Meerut Expressway aims to provide a faster and safer connectivity between Delhi and Meerut and beyond this, with Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The alignment of DME starts from Nizamuddin Bridge from Delhi and follows existing NH 24 upto Dasna. While one leg of DME will continue from Dasna on NH 24 to Hapur, a Greenfield alignment has been planned from Dasna to Meerut. The Expressway is being constructed in 4 packages. The total length of the project is 82 km, of which the first 27.74 kms will be 14-laned, while the rest will be 6-lane expressway. The project is likely to cost Rs 4975.17 crore.
- The 8.36 km long Package -1 of the projects** was inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister in May this year. It is a 14 lane, access-controlled section stretching from Nizamuddin Bridge to Delhi UP Border, and was completed in a record time of 18 months as against the earlier expected construction period of 30 months, at a cost of about Rs. 841.50 crore. This is the first National Highway in the country with 14 lanes, and has several features that would help reduce pollution. These include a 2.5-metre-wide cycle track on either side of the highway, a vertical garden on the Yamuna Bridge, solar lighting system and watering of plants through drip irrigation only.
- Package II from UP Border to Dasna(19.28 km), Package –III - Dasna to Hapur(22.27) km and Package –IV - Green-field Alignment from Dasna to Meerut –(31.78 km)** are under construction and are likely to be completed by March 2019. Vadodara-Mumbai Expressway The 473 km expressway will link Ahmedabad-Vadodara Expressway to Mumbai-Pune Expressway thus providing Expressway connectivity from Ahmedabad to Pune for a length of about 650 Km.
- Delhi – Mumbai Expressway** This 1250 km Expressway is being developed along a new alignment between Delhi and Mumbai, which passes through backward and tribal districts of Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. A sum of one lakh crore rupees will be spent on this expressway. It will reduce the distance between Delhi and Mumbai from the present 1450km through NH 8 to 1250 km, and the travel time to 12 hours. The sections of proposed highway from Delhi to Dahod in Rajasthan are under tendering, while the section between Vadodara to Ankleshwar in Gujarat have already been awarded. The DPR is under progress for the remaining sections.
- Bangalore-Chennai Expressway** DPR is under progress for this 260 km Expressway. This is a green-field alignment. There are two existing roads connecting Bangalore-Chennai, one is via Hoskote (Bangalore)-AP then to Chennai & second is via Electronic City (Bangalore) Hosur(Tamil Nadu) and then to Chennai. The alignment of the proposed expressway is passing in between these two stretches. Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway Greenfield alignment is being explored for this 500 km long proposed Expressway. Nagpur-Hyderabad-Bangalore (NBH) Expressway DPR has been awarded and alignment finalization is under progress for the new green-field 940 km Nagpur – Hyderabad – Bangalore EXP.
- Kanpur Lucknow (KL) Expressway DPR is in progress for 75 km of Kanpur – Lucknow EXP** Varanasi Airport Road and Ring Road Hon'ble Prime Minister inaugurated the 16.55 km, Rs 759.36 crore Varanasi Ring Road Phase-I and 17.25 km, Rs 812.59 crore Babatput-Varanasi road on NH-56 in November. It has reduced the travel time from Varanasi to the airport, and is proving a big relief to the people of Varanasi and to tourists providing a more convenient access to Sarnath, an important site for Buddhist pilgrimage.
- ByetDwarka – Okha Bridge** The Ministry has taken up construction of a signature 4-lane Bridge to connect the mainland at Okha to Byet-Dwarka Island off the Gujarat Coast with this Signature Bridge spanning a length of 2.32 kms. The Project has been awarded on 01.01.2018 at a cost of Rs. 689.47 crores. This will be the longest span cable stayed bridge in India with the main span of 500 mtrs. The project is scheduled to be completed in a period of 30 months.
- Bridge over Ganga in Phaphamau in Allahabad** Approval has been given for a project for construction of 9.9 km long new 6 - lane bridge across river Ganga on NH - 96 at Phaphamau in Allahabad with total capital cost of Rs. 1948.25 crore. The construction period for the project is three years and likely to be completed by December, 2021. The new bridge will resolve the traffic congestion on existing old 2 - lane Phaphamau bridge on NH-96 at Allahabad. The new bridge will also facilitate to the large congregation of people at Holy City Allahabad during Kumbh, Ardh-Kumbh and other yearly ritual baths at SANGAM in

Prayag. This will give a boost to pilgrimage tourism and local economy of Holy city of Prayag. This new 6 - lane bridge will also be beneficial for the Lucknow / Faizabad bound traffic coming from Madhya Pradesh via National Highway - 27 and National Highway - 76 through Naini Bridge. In addition, this project of new bridge will generate direct employment during construction for about 9.20 lakh mandays.

- **Bridge over River Kosi at Phulaut in Bihar** Approval was given to a project for construction of 6.930 km long 4-lane bridge at Phulaut in Bihar, along with approval for rehabilitation and up-gradation of existing Birpur- Bihpur section of National Highway-106. The construction of this new Bridge will fill the existing 30 km long gap between Udakishanganj and Bihpur of National Highway Number 106 in Bihar, which will provide through connectivity between Nepal/ North Bihar/ East-West Corridor (passing through NH- 57) and South Bihar/ Jharkhand/ Golden Quadrilateral (passing through NH -2), besides full utilization of National Highway Number-31.
- **Logistics Parks** A network of 35 Multimodal Logistics Parks had been identified for development in the Phase – 1 of BharatmalaPariyojana. The availability of the land parcels for development of Multimodal Logistics Parks has been confirmed at 7 locations and DPRs have been initiated in all the nodes.
- **Zojila Tunnel** This is a project for constructing a 14.150 km long, 2-lane bi-directional Zojila Tunnel in Jammu & Kashmir. This would be India's longest road tunnel and the longest bi-directional tunnel in Asia. The construction of this tunnel will provide all weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh and will bring about all round economic and socio-cultural integration of these regions.
- **Silkarya- Bend - Barkot Tunnel** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the construction, operation and maintenance of the 2- Lane, 4.532 Km long Bi-directional Silkarya Bend - Barkot Tunnel on Dharasu-Yamunotri section along NH -134 in the State of Uttarakhand. The project forms part of the Chardham Plan. The construction period of the project is 4 years at an estimated cost of Rs. 1383.78 crore. Once complete, this stretch will reduce the travel distance from Dharasu to Yamunotri by about 20 Km and travel time by about an hour. It will also provide all weather connectivity to Yamunotri, encouraging regional socio-economic development, trade and tourism within the country. The project will be implemented by National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (NHIDCL).
- **Highways Projects in the North East** Around Rs. 1,90,000 crore worth of projects have been sanctioned for the construction of road projects for over 12,000 km in the North East region. The projects being executed by NHIDCL are to the tune of Rs. 1, 66,026 crore, covering 10,892 km of roads in all the eight NE states. Projects costing Rs. 17,257 crore have been allotted to the respective state PWDs. Further, projects costing Rs. 7,000 crore are entrusted to the NHAI.
- **Funding Models and Other Policies to Facilitate Construction of National Highways:** Measures to revive Languishing stalled projects The Ministry has focused on completion of on-going projects along with sanction and award of new projects. A total of 73 projects (8,187 km) worth an estimated investment of Rs.1,00,000 crore were identified as Languishing Projects. The reasons for delay were identified and policy interventions undertaken to address the same.
- **Toll-Operate-Transfer Model** The Ministry is monetizing its road assets constructed with public funds through Toll-Operate-Transfer (ToT) scheme. The scheme envisages bidding of bundled national highways for a concession period of 30 years. The first bundle comprised 9 projects, totalling 681 km of roads in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. It was awarded in 2018 to Macquarie for Rs. 9,681 Crore, which was 1.5 times the NHAI's estimate. The second bundle comprises over 586 kms spread over four states – Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal and Bihar. The offer has 12 toll plazas across four highways.
- **MoU between NHAI and SBI** The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State Bank of India to receive Rs. 25,000 crore as a long-term, unsecured loan for 10 years. This is the largest amount of loan to have been sanctioned by the SBI in one go. This is also the largest ever fund that NHAI has ever received in one go.
- **Guidelines for alignment of National Highways** The Ministry has issued detailed guidelines for determination of proper alignment of NH projects, advising executing agencies to examine the feasibility of a green- field alignment, especially in the case of economic corridors, instead of widening existing highways. This has been done because widening involves acquisition of land for Right of Way (RoW), shifting of utilities and demolition of built up structure, all of which involves a lot of time and cost. Also, earlier highways were largely planned to be serpentine, linking all possible towns in the vicinity. This road geometry has been found to be sub optimal, especially in case of economic corridors. BharatmalaPariyojana also calls for a corridor approach for economic corridors. It has also been found in a few test cases that it is feasible to acquire a RoW of 60 to 70 mtrs for a green field road project at the same cost as involved in the expansion of an existing road, especially when the associated costs and time taken in utility shifting, tree felling, additional compensation for demolition of structures coming in the RoW under expansion are taken into account.

Platform for e-Gazetting and Payment of Compensation for Land Acquisition through PFMS

- **A Web Utility has been developed where by the land acquisition procedure for the NH projects**, including processing of all LA related gazette notifications, are being done through a common platform called "BhoomiRashi". The Utility has been linked with the e-gazette platform of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, for publication of Gazette Notifications. The use of Bhumi Rashi has helped in cutting down the processing time from 2 to 3 months earlier to one to two weeks now.
- **BhoomiRashi** has also been integrated with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) platform of the Ministry of Finance for deposit of compensation in the account of landowners/interested persons on a real time basis, instead of being parked with CALA.
- **Bidder Information Management System** The Ministry has developed a Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) to streamline the process of pre-qualification of bidders for contracts on EPC mode for all NH works and centrally sponsored works. BIMS acts as a data base for all basic details of bidders like civil works experience, cash accruals and network, annual turnover etc.,. This allows quick pre-qualification assessment of bidders based on evaluation parameters like threshold capacity and bid capacity from already stored data. Technical evaluation can therefore be carried out faster using this information.

- **Launch of Annual Awards** for Excellence In National Highways Sector Annual awards for excellence in National Highways sector has been instituted from this year onwards for recognizing concessionaires and contractors who have been performing exceptionally well. Applications have been invited from all the concessionaires and contractors working in the field of highways construction and tolling. These awards are designed across the five categories of construction management, operation and maintenance, best toll plaza, safest highway, innovation in design and construction technology.
- **Highway Capacity Manual** India's first Highway Capacity Manual developed by CSIR-CRRI was launched this year. The manual is designed to be a tool for guiding road engineers and policy makers in the country. It lays down guidelines for the development and management of different types of roads, based on traffic characteristics on such roads having varying lane configurations.
- **Workshop on issues** relating to Land Acquisition, Contract Document etc. The Ministry has organized a workshop on 18.12.2018 in Delhi for Regional Officers of Ministry, NHAI and NHIDCL to discuss the issues relating to land acquisition, contract document (EPC/DPR) and E-Disha (ERP projects), new standards and technical specifications. A Manual of Guidelines on Land Acquisition for National Highways under the National Highways Act, 1956 has also been released for seamless process of Land Acquisition for National Highways.
- **ROAD SAFETY Reduction in number of road accidents** As per the Ministry's annual report on road accidents based on the data reported by Police authorities throughout India, there has been some marginal reduction in the number of road accidents and fatalities in 2017, as can be seen from the table below.
- **The Ministry has been making concerted efforts to address the problem of road safety through a series of measures** that include improving road infrastructure, road safety audits, identification and rectification of black spots on roads and strengthening the automobile safety standards, organizing road safety awareness programmes and strengthening enforcement etc. These efforts have started showing some results.
- **Rectification of Accident Black Spots** The Ministry has so far identified 789 road accident black spots in various States of which 651 ON National Highways and 138 are on State roads. Work for rectification of these black spots is at various stages of completion.
- **Guidelines for setting up Driver Training Schools in districts** The Ministry has been working in association with States, Vehicle manufactures and NGOs for strengthening the driving training. Institute of Driving training and Research (IDTRs), Regional Driving Training Centres (RDTCs) and Driving Training Centre (DTC) have been established which act as model Driving Training Centres with state of art infrastructure. Ministry has also launched a scheme for creating driving training centres in all the districts of the country and support refresher-training programme for heavy commercial vehicles drivers. The Ministry is implementing a scheme for setting up of Model Institute of Drivers Training and Research (IDTR) by States/UTs. So far 24 (nos.) IDTRs have been sanctioned in different States/UTs and about 16 are complete and functioning.

Guidelines for financing NGOs for road safety advocacy

- **The Ministry has issued guidelines** associating Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for promoting awareness about road safety under a scheme titled "Grant of financial assistance for administering Road Safety Advocacy and awards for the outstanding work done in the field of Road Safety". It is envisaged that the NGOs will undertake activities for creating road safety awareness among citizens.
- **SukhadYatra App and Toll-Free Emergency Number** A mobile App and Toll-free Emergency number 1033 for highway users, developed by NHAI, were launched in March this year. The SukhadYatra mobile application provides information on toll gates. The key feature of the app includes a provision for the user to enter road quality-related information or to report any accident or pothole on the highway. It also provides users with real-time data related to waiting time expected at toll plazas and various facilities like points of interest, highway nest/ nest mini, etc. The app can also be used to purchase FASTags.
- **The toll-free number 1033** will enable users to report an emergency condition, or highway-related feedback, across the highway. The service has also been integrated with ambulance / tow away services along the roads.
- **Observance of the 29th National Road Safety Week** This Ministry observed the 29th National Road Safety Week from 23rd to 30th April 2018. This year's focus was on schools and commercial drivers and the theme was "Sadak Suraksha Jeevan Raksha". In the opening ceremony the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways emphasized the Ministry's priorities in ensuring safety of road users in the country. Awards were given to 10 school children who won the national level essay competition on road safety. The Hon'ble Minister also administered the road safety pledge to all those present on the occasion. A variety of programmes related to the Road Safety were also organized in several cities across the country to enlighten people on Road Safety, and Driving Rules. Many NGOs participated in the Ministry's efforts to create awareness about the issue.
- **GoM on Road Safety** The Ministry had constituted a group of State Transport Ministers under the Chairmanship of Shri Yunus Khan, Transport Minister of Rajasthan to work out interstate issues and reach a consensus on adoption of uniform rates of taxation, permits and other issues. A Group of Transport Ministers from 13 states met in Guwahati on 18-19 April this year and adopted a 9-Point Guwahati Declaration aimed at harmonization of taxes and permits, road safety measures, policy changes and measures for strengthening State Road Transport Undertakings. The most important decisions taken by during the meeting included the recommendation for One Nation One Tax for the diverse road tax structure, which would ease travel.
- **Rs. 5 Lakh Compensation to accident victims:** In order to help accident victims in getting reasonable and fast compensation from insurance companies, the Ministry revised the relevant rules of the Motor Vehicles Act according to which every accident victim or his next of kin will be entitled to a compensation of Rs 5 lakh in case of death, and upto Rs 5 lakh, proportionate to the extent of injury in case of grievous hurt and disablement. Accident victims can claim higher compensation through court if they are not satisfied, but with this rule even the poorest of the poor will get a fast and reasonable compensation.

- **CCTV installation at Toll Plazas:** A Central Command and Control Centre is being set up at the NHAI HQ for CCTV surveillance and Monitoring of Vehicular Congestion at 210 Fee Plazas of National Highways that have higher traffic volumes. It is proposed to be connected with Regional Offices and the project execution is on service model for a period of five years.
- **Films on Road Safety:** Three short films for generating public awareness for the need to comply with the rules of the road, eventually contributing to the cause of road safety, were launched by Hon'ble Minister for Road Transport & Highways, on 14th August, 2018. Film actor Shri Akshay Kumar who featured in these films on pro bono basis, has also been appointed as Road Safety Brand Ambassador by the Hon'ble Minister.
- **Capacity Building in the area of Road Safety:** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has designated the Asian Institute of Transport Development as an apex body for capacity building in the area of road safety. The objective is that this centre would act as a depository of research studies and best practices. Human resource development and exchange of knowledge form an important component of its activities. Up to October 2018, the National Centre for Road Safety has been able to train over 1,400 professionals in road safety and road safety audit by conducting 31 courses pan India.
- **INITIATIVES IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR:** The Ministry took several initiatives in the transport sector during the year to make road travel more convenient for people. Some of these areas under-
 - **Simplification of Driving License Application** To improve ease in licensing, this Ministry has simplified the driving license application form. Four forms i.e. (a) Learner License, (b) Driving License, (c) Renewal of License, and (d) updation of Address - all have been consolidated into one. The new form will enable Aadhar based verification of the applicant's identity to provide online services for renewal, change of address etc. Another highlight of the new form is that it would capture an applicant's willingness for organ donation.
 - **Revision of Axle Weight:** The permissible safe axle weight of goods vehicles was revised and increased by about 15% to 20 % for different configurations of axles. The decision was taken with a view to help in increasing the carrying capacity of goods transport vehicles and bring down logistics cost. The amendment will increase the carrying capacity of goods vehicles by about 20-25 % and lower logistics costs by about 2%. It will also bring down the incidence of overloading. While automobile technology and road construction quality have improved greatly over the years, the axle loads have remained the same since 1983 when they were last notified. There was a felt need to harmonize the axle load with international standards.
 - **Launch of Ranking System for Toll Plazas** NHAI has developed a matrix-based methodology to rank the Fee Plazas on parameters such as electronic tolling, time taken in clearance of FASTag lanes, display panels, staff behaviour, cleanliness, etc. The data for the matrix is to be collected by the Regional Officers who will use the same to rank the Fee Plazas under their jurisdiction. Meanwhile, a countrywide drive was launched by NHAI on more than 300 toll plazas across the country on 10 February, 2018, to address issues that affect highway users. Officers visited toll plazas and addressed issues of user convenience and took feedback from the people.
 - **Revision in Maximum Speed of vehicles** The Ministry has revised the maximum speed of various classes of vehicles vide notification dated 6th April 2018. The notification prescribes the speed of various classes of vehicles. Thus a passenger vehicle with not more than 8 seats including driver can have a maximum speed of 120 km/hr on expressways and 70km/hr on municipal roads.
 - **Acceptance of Documents through DigiLocker and mParivahan Platform** An advisory has been issued by the Ministry to all the States / UTs to accept the documents in electronic form through DigiLocker platform of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India and the mParivahan mobile app of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways. Such electronic records available on DigiLocker or mParivahan are deemed to be legally recognized at par with the original documents as per the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000. This will also address Grievances / RTI applications of the citizens and facilitate promotion of Digital India campaign.
 - **Notification regarding Vehicle Location Tracking Device and Emergency Button in all public service vehicles** With a view to enhancing the safety of women passengers, detailed standards for Installation of Vehicle Location Tracking Device (VLT) and Emergency Button on public service vehicles have been notified on October 25, 2018. The States/ UTs have been mandated to ensure compliance of the rule and check fitment and functional status of the VLT device in the public service vehicles at the time of checking of the vehicles for fitness certification. The Command and Control Centres in the States will be used to provide interface to various stakeholders such as State emergency response centre, the Transport authorities of the state and central governments, device manufacturers and their authorized dealers, testing agencies etc. The Command and control Centre will also be able to provide feed to the VAHAN database or the relevant data base of the state with regard to over speeding and the health status of the device.
 - **Fitness Certificate in respect of Transport Vehicle** As per this notification the renewal of the fitness certificate in respect of transport vehicle up to eight years old shall be done for two years and for one year for vehicle older than eight years. No fitness certification shall be required at the time of registration for the new transport vehicle sold as fully built vehicle and such vehicle shall be deemed to be having certificate of fitness for a period of two years from the date of registration.
 - **Use of Dual Fuel** The Ministry has issued a notification for Dual fuel usage which covers Emission of smoke and vapour from agriculture tractors, power tillers, construction equipment vehicles and combine harvesters driven by dual fuel diesel with Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) or Bio-Compressed Natural Gas (Bio-CNG) or Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) engines.

GREEN INITIATIVES:

- **Electric, Ethanol and Methanol Vehicles exempted from Permit** Keeping in view the need for promoting electric mobility and alternate fuels, the Ministry, vide notification issued on October 18, 2018, has exempted Battery Operated Vehicles, as well as vehicles driven on Methanol fuel or Ethanol fuel, from the requirement of permit for carrying passengers or goods.
- **Advisory on Linking of PUC data (emission related data)** with the VAHAN database A system has been developed and tested by this Ministry for linking of Pollution Under Control (PUC) data with the VAHAN database. An advisory dated October 1, 2018 has been issued to all the States by the Ministry wherein all the PUC vendors have been directed to comply with the guidelines and facilitate electronic uploading of emissions test data to VAHAN database.
- **Notification regarding Registration Mark of Battery Operated Vehicles** To give a distinct identity to the electric vehicles, it has been decided that the registration mark will be exhibited on a number plate with Green background. A notification to this effect was issued on 7th August, 2018.
- **M 15 (15%) Methanol blending with Gasoline** The Ministry issued a notification regarding the blending of Gasoline with methanol in order to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions and also to reduce the import burden on account of crude petroleum from which gasoline is produced. The Hon'ble Prime Minister had announced an ambitious target of reducing 10% import dependence of oil and gas by 2022 from 2014-15 levels. Methanol can be used as an alternative transportation fuel thereby reducing import dependence to some extent.
- **Requirement of PUC Certificate for vehicle insurance/ renewal of insurance** The Ministry has requested IRDA and the MDs / Chairpersons of all general insurance companies on to ensure that no third-party insurance policy is issued or renewed without ascertaining the availability of a valid PUC. This has been done following orders of the Supreme Court of India.
- **Emission Standards for Construction Equipment Vehicles and Tractors** The Ministry has notified emission standards for Construction Equipment Vehicles and Tractors. These standards would be implemented w.e.f. 1st October, 2020 (Trem IV) and from 1st April, 2024 [Bharat Stage (CEV/Trem)-V]. This would help in ensuring environment friendly construction / mining activities.
- **Quadricycles included as Non-Transport Vehicles** The Ministry notified the insertion of the item 'Quadricycle' as a 'non-transport' vehicle under the Motor Vehicles Act 1988. A Quadricycle is a vehicle of the size of a 3-wheeler but with 4tyres and fully covered like a car. It has an engine like that of a 3-wheeler. This makes it a cheap and safe mode of transport for last mile connectivity. Quadricycles were only allowed for transport usage under the Act, but now has been made usable for non-transport also.

E INITIATIVES:

- **National Award on e-Governance to INAMPRO** The "INAMPRO" project initiated by NHIDCL, a CPSE under this Ministry, has been conferred with a 'Gold' award under Category- I "Excellence in Government Process Re-engineering" for the National Award in e-Governance by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances.
- **Electronic Toll Collection (ETC)** The Electronic Toll Collection Program has seen exponential growth in terms of number of Fastags sold and user fees collected electronically. With a total number of 440 Toll Plazas, more than 34.3 lakh Fastags units have been issued till October this year, and 25 to 27% of the revenues are being collected using the ETC mode. Use of FASTag has also seen significant growth, both in terms of user fees collected and penetration, from Rs 210.1 Cr with 13.1% penetration in April 2017 to Rs 446. 8 Cr with 24.8% penetration in the month of August 2018.
- **Linkage of PFMS with Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) and BhoomiRashi** The two IT initiatives of this Ministry, which are aimed at expediting pre- construction processes relating to bidding and land acquisition respectively, have now been integrated with the Public Financial management System (PFMS). The Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) is aimed at streamlining the process of pre-qualification of bidders for EPC Mode of contracts for National Highway works with enhanced transparency and objectivity. The BhoomiRashi portal of Ministry of Road Transport & Highways allows for totally digital and paper-less processing of land acquisition cases, and has resulted in transparent, quick, corruption-free and error-free handling of land acquisition cases. It has also made the possible real-time tracking of activities and generation of reports relating to land acquisition. Revenue records of about 7 lakh villages across the country have been integrated in the portal. This digital change has drastically reduced the time taken for issuance of land acquisition notifications from 3-6 months to 1-2 weeks. Over 2000 notifications have already been issued by the Ministry in the first eight months of this financial year that while during the past two years, about a thousand land acquisition notifications could be issued every year. The process has also brought transparency in the system. Earlier the approved compensation amount used to be parked with the CALA (Competent Authority for Land Acquisition) but with BhoomiRashi portal this amount directly transferred into the account of the person concerned, through Public Financial Management System which is an integral part of the portal. In addition to this, the process is also environment friendly since there is no physical movement of files – all work is done digitally.
- **Advisory regarding** keeping transport related documents in an electronic form An advisory has been issued by this Ministry wherein the citizen can produce the transport related documents such as registration, insurance, fitness and permit, the driving licence, certificate for pollution under check and any other relevant documents, if required, in physical or electronic form, on demand by any police officer in uniform or any other officer authorized by the State Government in this behalf. This would enable the use of digital platforms for carrying and verification of the documents and is a step towards citizen facilitation and to ensure so that citizen are not harassed/ inconvenienced.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- **MoU with Transport for London** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways signed a MoU with Transport for London (TFL) on 10th January, 2018. TFL is an agency that manages the transport system for Greater London, and has demonstrated its capability by creating strong and dependable public transport system in the city of London. It has created a unique system of operating buses in PPP model with over 17 operators under a single brand. The MoUs aimed at using the expertise of TFL to revamp the public transport architecture in the country.
- **2ND meeting of India-Nepal** Cross Border Transport Facilitation Working Group After a long hiatus, the 2nd meeting of India-Nepal Cross Border Transport Facilitation Working Group was held at Kathmandu on 23rd February, 2018 under the India-Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement for regulation of vehicular traffic between the two countries. It was agreed to start regular bus services on the new routes of Mahendrangar- Dehradun, Nepalgunj- Haridwar, Nepalgunj- Lucknow, Nepalgunj -Delhi and Kathmandu-Gorakhpur, through designated operators from Nepal and India. It was also agreed to start operation of bus services on Kathmandu -Siliguri and Janakpur- Patna routes. Both sides also noted with mutual interest the possibility of opening of other routes to be considered on the basis of commercial demand and availability of infrastructure by mutual consent.
- **Bus trial run across Bangladesh, India and Nepal** Taking another step towards furthering seamless passenger vehicle movement across Bangladesh, India and Nepal (BIN) under BBIN MVA signed in June 2015. A trial run of two passenger buses from Dhaka, was conducted in April, 2018, with 43 passengers. The trial run started from Dhaka on 23rd April and reached Kathmandu on 26th April 2018. The participating countries have also agreed to conduct more trial runs for cargo vehicles under the agreement.
- **First Working Group Meeting of BIMSTEC** The first Working Group meeting of BIMSTEC to negotiate the draft text of Motor Vehicles Agreement for the regulation of passenger and cargo vehicular traffic among and between member states was held in April this year. Delegations from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Myanmar attended the meeting. The draft text of the agreement was discussed and amended. The member countries will further examine the amended text.
- **MoU between India and Uganda** An MoU was signed between the Central Materials Laboratory (ML), Kampala, Uganda and the Indian Academy of Highway Engineers (IAHE) under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, India, during the visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to Uganda on 24-25 July, 2018, for establishment of a Regional Materials Testing Laboratory for Highways in Uganda.
- **65th India-Japan Joint Working Group Meeting in the Roads and Road Transport Sector** The 5th India-Japan Joint Working Group Meeting in the Roads and Road Transport Sector was held on 12th November, 2018 in New Delhi as provided under the Framework of Cooperation (FoC) between the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), India and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), Japan. In the meeting, information regarding the latest technological developments in "Operation and Maintenance of Expressway", "Development of Mountainous Road in North East Regions" and "Countermeasure of Aging Structure" etc. was shared.
- **MoU of India with Russia** The proposal for a MoU on Bilateral Cooperation in the Road Transport & Road Industry sector, between Ministry of road transport & Highways and the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation, has been approved by the Union Cabinet in its meeting on October 3, 2018.
- **OTHERS: Wayside Amenities and Highway Nest (Mini)** While the procurement process is under way for the development of Wayside Amenities of larger sizes in PPP mode along the National Highways, the NHAI has taken up construction of 314 numbers Highway Nest (mini). These are being developed near Toll Plazas, approximately 200 meters downstream on a 10mX20m paved platform and comprises of facilities like toilets, water, ATR, a small kiosk with Tea / Coffee vending machine and packaged food items for Highway users.
- **Swachhta Pakhwada and 'Swachhta Hi Sewa' Campagin (SHS)** The Swachhta Pakhwada was organised by the Ministry between September 15, 2018 and October 2, across all National Highways. Several activities related to shramdaan and cleaning of schools in villages adjacent to the National Highways were also organized by the NHAI during the period. Construction of toilets, both for men and women, installation of litter-bins and hoardings at NHAI toll plazas have been taken up by the Ministry under Swachh Bharat Mission. The Ministry was conferred with a special award for its implementation of the Swachhta Action Plan for 2017-18 by the nodal Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

ISRO launches Samwad with Students on New Year Day

- **As part of the enhanced outreach programme** of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), a new platform named "Samwad with Students" (SwS) was launched in Bengaluru today. Through the SwS initiative, ISRO aims to constantly engage youngsters across India to capture their scientific temperament. The new conversation mission will inspire students cutting across schools and colleges. The first SwS event saw 40 wards and 10 teachers from select schools interact with ISRO Chairman Dr K Sivan at the Ananthakrishnan Bhavan.
- **During the three-hour stay at ISRO HQ**, the students were first briefed about Indian space programme and their benefits to the common man. In his opening remarks Dr Sivan said the SwS aims at drawing inspiration and motivation from young India. "All of you with your boundless energy and endless curiosity are going to be my biggest source of inspiration and motivation. With so many challenging on hand this year, I thought it is important to seek the well wishes of students who are the future of this country," Dr Sivan said.
- **The Q&A session that followed saw Dr Sivan engaging** students on a series of topics ranging from rockets, satellites, Chandrayaan, Gaganyaan and various space applications. When an 8th Standard student asked about whether ISRO was his first choice as a youngster, Dr Sivan said: "I was very shy when I was young. And, as far as college and career goes, I was always denied my first choice. After high school, I wanted to study Engineering but ended up studying

B.Sc Mathematics. Later, I got into Engineering and wanted to join ISAC (now URSC) Bengaluru, instead joined VSSC at Thiruvananthapuram. At VSSC, I wanted to join the Aerodynamics group, but was part of PSLV project instead."

- **To another query from a 10th Standard student**, - How scientists cope up with failures, Dr Sivan said the biggest lessons in life are often derived when the plans go astray. "Space missions are very complex in nature and totally different from terrestrial systems. They have to work in extreme environments more often. Our forefathers have shown us path to take failures in our stride and take on the challenges with a positive mindset," he said.
- **When a student was keen to know how they could** contribute to ISRO's missions, Dr Sivan said: "When you complete your studies with focus on fundamentals of science, you could get back to us and help us solve our problems. We need solutions to many complex problems and you could be giving us answers to them in future."
- **Dr Sivan explained to the students the importance** of Indian space programme and its benefits to the society at large. He wanted them to take up science and mathematics with absolute seriousness which would enable them to take up challenging careers. "Whenever, we are short of ideas or inspiration, we will look for you. We will be ever ready to answer your questions related to India's space missions," Dr Sivan added. On the sidelines, the students and teachers also interacted with ISRO scientists and engineers.

Agri Export Zones

- **The concept of Agri Export Zone (AEZ)** was introduced in 2001, through EXIM Policy 1997-2001, to take a comprehensive look at a particular produce/product located in a contiguous area for the purpose of developing and sourcing the raw materials, their processing/packaging, leading to final exports. The concept hinged primarily on convergence of existing Central and State Government schemes to take care of financial interventions required at various stages of value chain; partnership among various stakeholders viz.
- **Central Government**, State Government, farmer, processor, exporter etc.; and focus on targeted products and areas to identify required policy interventions.
- **All these activities** did take place in certain respects in the notified Agri Export Zones.
- **In December 2004**, an internal peer review conducted by Department of Commerce concluded that the notified AEZs had not been able to achieve the intended objectives.
- **It was decided** that there will be no creation of new AEZs, unless there were strong and compelling reasons.
- **No new AEZs** have been set up after 2004. All the notified AEZs have completed their intended span of 5 years and have been discontinued.
- **In all 60 Agri Export Zones (AEZ)** were notified by the Government till 2004 - 05.

Benefits of RCEP Agreement

- **The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**, which is a proposed Free Trade Agreement between ten ASEAN member states and their six Free Trade Agreement (FTA) partners namely India, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and Republic of Korea, is expected to provide market access for India's goods and services exports and encourage greater investments and technology into India.
- **It would also facilitate India's** MSMEs to effectively integrate into the regional value and supply chains.
- **On the other hand**, India is not a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) which is a grouping of twenty-one countries in the Asia Pacific region with an aim to deepen and strengthen economic and technological cooperation amongst APEC member countries.

Mohan Reddy Committee

- **The committee** was appointed to come up with a medium and short-term perspective plan for expansion in engineering education.
- **Important recommendations made by the committee:** Stop setting up new colleges from 2020 and review the creation of new capacity every two years after that. No additional seats should be approved in traditional engineering areas such as mechanical, electrical, civil and electronics and institutes should be encouraged to convert current capacity in traditional disciplines to emerging new technologies.
- **For approving** additional seats in existing institutions, the AICTE should only give approvals based on the capacity utilisation of concerned institute. Introduce undergraduate engineering programmes exclusively for artificial intelligence, blockchain, robotics, quantum computing, data sciences, cybersecurity and 3D printing and design.
- **What necessitated this?** More than half the engineering seats fall vacant every year. There were no takers for 51% of the 15.5 lakh B.E/B.Tech seats in 3,291 engineering colleges in 2016-17. Besides, current capacity utilisation in traditional disciplines is just 40% as opposed to 60% seat occupancy in branches such as computer science and engineering, aerospace engineering and mechatronics.
- **There were glaring gaps** in regulation, including alleged corruption; a vicious circle of poor infrastructure, labs and faculty; non-existent linkages with industry; and the absence of a technical ecosystem to nurture the classroom. All this accounted for low employability of graduates.

Khushi Scheme of Odisha

- **About Khushi Scheme:** As part of its initiatives to empower women, the Odisha government, last year, launched this scheme to provide free sanitary napkins to school girls across the state.
- **The scheme will** be implemented by the health and family welfare department of the state at a cost of 70 crore per year. Under this scheme, the Health Department of Odisha Government aims to provide free sanitary pads to 1.7 million girl students from grade 6th to 12th in government and government-aided schools. Also, it aims to promote health and hygiene among school going girls and higher retention of girls in school.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- **India is** among the first five countries in the world, the first in Asia and the first among the biodiversity-rich megadiverse countries to have submitted the report.
- **Background:** The submission of national reports is a mandatory obligation on parties to international treaties, including the CBD. As a responsible nation, India has never reneged on its international commitments and has earlier submitted on time five national reports to the CBD.
- **Highlights of the report:** The report provides an update of progress in achievement of 12 National Biodiversity Targets (NBT) developed under the convention process in line with the 20 global Aichi biodiversity targets. The report highlights that while India has exceeded/ overachieved two NBTs, it is on track to achieve eight NBTs and with respect to two remaining NBTs, the country is striving to meet the targets by the stipulated time of 2020. According to the report, India has exceeded the terrestrial component of 17% of Aichi target 11, and 20% of corresponding NBT relating to areas under biodiversity management.
- **Also, India** has been investing a huge amount on biodiversity directly or indirectly through several development schemes of the central and state governments, to the tune of Rs 70,000 crores per annum as against the estimated annual requirement of nearly Rs 1,09,000 crore.
- **About CBD:** At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, world leaders agreed on a comprehensive strategy for “sustainable development” — meeting our needs while ensuring that we leave a healthy and viable world for future generations. One of the key agreements adopted at Rio was the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Convention on Biological Diversity is the international legal instrument for “the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources” that has been ratified by 196 nations.
- **The 12 National Biodiversity targets of India are:** By 2020, a significant proportion of the country's population, especially the youth, is aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.
- **By 2020, values** of biodiversity are integrated into national and state planning processes, development programmes and poverty alleviation strategies. Strategies for reducing the rate of degradation, fragmentation and loss of all natural habitats are finalized and actions put in place by 2020 for environmental amelioration and human well-being. By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and strategies to manage them developed so that populations of prioritized invasive alien species are managed.

- **By 2020, measures** are adopted for sustainable management of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Ecologically representative areas under terrestrial and inland water, and also coastal and marine zones, especially those of particular importance for species, biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved effectively and equitably, based on protected area designation and management and other area-based conservation measures and are integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes, covering over 20% of the geographic area of the country, by 2020.
- **By 2020, genetic diversity** of cultivated plants, farm livestock, and their wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity. By 2020, ecosystem services, especially those relating to water, human health, livelihoods and well-being, are enumerated and measures to safeguard them are identified, taking into account the needs of women and local communities, particularly the poor and vulnerable sections.
- **By 2015, Access to Genetic Resources** and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization as per the Nagoya Protocol are operational, consistent with national legislation. By 2020, an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity action plan is made operational at different levels of governance.
- **By 2020, national initiatives using communities'** traditional knowledge relating to biodiversity are strengthened, with the view to protecting this knowledge in accordance with national legislation and international obligations. By 2020, opportunities to increase the availability of financial, human and technical resources to facilitate effective implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the national targets are identified and the Strategy for Resource Mobilization is adopted.
- **What are Aichi Targets?** The 'Aichi Targets' were adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at its Nagoya conference. It is a short term plan provides a set of 20 ambitious yet achievable targets, collectively known as the Aichi Targets. They can be divided into:
 - **Strategic Goal A:** Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society. **Strategic Goal B:** Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use. **Strategic Goal C:** To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.
 - **Strategic Goal D:** Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services. **Strategic Goal E:** Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

NASA's OSIRIS-Rex

- **Significance:** OSIRIS-Rex is the first-ever US mission designed to visit an asteroid and return a sample of its dust back to Earth. The \$800 million (roughly Rs. 5,600 crores) unmanned spaceship launched two years ago from Cape Canaveral, Florida and arrived December 3 at its destination, some 70 million miles (110 million kilometres) away.
- **What next?** The plan is for OSIRIS-Rex to orbit Bennu through mid-February, using a suite of five scientific instruments to map the asteroid in high resolution to help scientists decide precisely where to sample from. Then, in 2020, it will reach out with its robotic arm and touch the asteroid in a maneuver Rich Kuhns, OSIRIS-Rex program manager with Lockheed Martin Space Systems in Denver, described as a "gentle high-five." Using a circular device much like a car's air filter, and a reverse vacuum to stir up and collect dust, the device aims to grab about two ounces (60 grams) of material from the asteroid's surface, and return it to Earth in 2023.
- **About the mission:** OSIRIS-Rex stands for Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer. OSIRIS-Rex is the third mission in NASA's New Frontiers program, which previously sent the New Horizons spacecraft zooming by Pluto and the Juno spacecraft into orbit around Jupiter.
- **Why was Bennu chosen?** Bennu was selected for a the OSIRIS-Rex mission from over 500,000 known asteroids, due to it fitting a number of key criteria. These include: Proximity to Earth: In order for OSIRIS-Rex to reach its destination in a reasonable timeframe, NASA needed to find an asteroid which had a similar orbit to Earth.
- **Size: Small asteroids,** those less than 200m in diameter, typically spin much faster than larger asteroids, meaning the regolith material can be ejected into space. Bennu is around 500m in diameter, so rotates slowly enough to ensure that the regolith stays on its surface.
- **Composition:** Bennu is a primitive asteroid, meaning it hasn't significantly changed since the beginning of the Solar System (over 4 billion years ago). It is also very carbon-rich, meaning it may contain organic molecules, which could have been precursors to life on Earth.
- **Additionally,** Bennu is of interest as it is a Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA). Every 6 years, Bennu's orbit brings it within 200,000 miles of the Earth, which means it has a high probability of impacting Earth in the late 22nd Century.

NASA New Horizons

- **This is a historic flyby** of the farthest, and quite possibly the oldest, cosmic body ever explored by humankind.
- **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.

Space Activities Bill, 2017

- **Features of Space activities bill 2017:** It is a proposed Bill to promote and regulate the space activities of India. The new Bill encourages the participation of non-governmental/private sector agencies in space activities in India under the guidance and authorisation of the government through the Department of Space.
- **The provisions of this Act** shall apply to every citizen of India and to all sectors engaged in any space activity in India or outside India. A non-transferable licence shall be provided by the Central Government to any person carrying out commercial space activity.
- **The Central Government** will formulate the appropriate mechanism for licensing, eligibility criteria, and fees for licence. The government will maintain a register of all space objects (any object launched or intended to be launched around the earth) and develop more space activity plans for the country.
- **It will provide professional** and technical support for commercial space activity and regulate the procedures for conduct and operation of space activity. It will ensure safety requirements and supervise the conduct of every space activity of India and investigate any incident or accident in connection with the operation of a space activity.
- **It will share details** about the pricing of products created by space activity and technology with any person or any agency in a prescribed manner. If any person undertakes any commercial space activity without authorisation they shall be punished with imprisonment up to 3 years or fined more than ₹1 crore or both.
- **Need for a legislation on outer space:** There is a need for national space legislation for supporting the overall growth of the space activities in India. This would encourage enhanced participation of non-governmental/private sector agencies in space activities in India, in compliance with international treaty obligations, which is becoming very relevant today.

Indo – US 2+2 Dialogue

- **Content:** Recognizing their two countries are strategic partners, major and independent stakeholders in world affairs, the Ministers committed to work together on regional and global issues, including in bilateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral formats.
- **The two sides** further decided to establish secure communication between the Minister of External Affairs of India and the U.S. Secretary of State, and between the Minister of Defence of India and the U.S. Secretary of Defense, to help maintain regular high-level communication on emerging developments.
- **Strengthening the Defense and Security Partnership:** The Ministers welcomed the inclusion of India by the United States among the top tier of countries entitled to license-free exports, re-exports, and transfers under License Exception Strategic Trade Authorization (STA-1) and committed to explore other means to support further expansion in two-way trade in defense manufacturing supply chain linkages.
- **They welcomed** the signing of a Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), facilitate access to advanced defense systems and enable India to optimally utilize its existing U.S. origin platforms. The Ministers announced their readiness to begin negotiations on an Industrial Security Annex (ISA) that would support closer defense industry cooperation and collaboration.

- **After recognizing** the recent bilateral engagements, the Ministers committed to start exchanges between the S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and the Indian Navy, underscoring the importance of deepening their maritime cooperation in the western Indian Ocean.
- **Through the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)**, the ministers committed to prioritize co-production and co-development projects to pursue other avenues of defense innovation cooperation. Further they welcomed the conclusion of a Memorandum of Intent between the S. Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) and the Indian Defense Innovation Organization – Innovation for Defence Excellence (DIO-iDEX).
- **The Ministers announced** to increase information-sharing efforts on known or suspected terrorists and to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2396 on returning foreign terrorist fighters.
- **Partners in the Indo-Pacific and Beyond:** The Ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to a united, sovereign, democratic, inclusive, stable, prosperous, and peaceful Afghanistan. The two sides expressed their support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process.
- **India welcomed the recent U.S. – North Korea summit.** The two sides pledged to work together to counter North Korea's weapons of mass destruction programs and to hold accountable those countries that have supported them. The United States welcomed India's accession to the Australia Group, the Wassenaar Arrangement, and the Missile Technology Control Regime and reiterated its full support for India's immediate accession to the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- **Promoting Prosperity and People-to People Ties:** Both countries committed to further expanding and balancing the trade and economic partnership consistent with their leaders' 2017 joint statement, including by facilitating trade, improving market access, and addressing issues of interest to both sides. Thus, both sides welcomed the ongoing exchanges between the Ministry of Commerce of India and the Office of the United States Trade Representative and hoped for mutually acceptable outcomes.
- **Both sides looked** forward to full implementation of the civil nuclear energy partnership and collaboration between Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and Westinghouse Electric Company for the establishment of six nuclear power plants in India.
- **Observing the strong ties** of family, education, and business, and the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation that unite their people, the Ministers highlighted the unmatched people-to-people ties between their countries and recognized the benefits to both nations and the world from these ties, including the free flow of ideas and collaboration in health, space, oceans, and other areas of science and technology. The next 2+2 meeting is to be held in the United States in 2019.

Establishing Gas Trading Hub/Exchange in the country

- **It has been agreed to establish** the gas trading hub(s)/exchange(s) in the country wherein the natural gas can be freely traded and supplied through a market mechanism.
- **Development of Natural Gas Grid: To develop the natural gas grid**, Government has taken a decision to provide a capital grant of Rs. 5176 crore (i.e. 40% of the estimated capital cost of Rs. 12,940 Crore) to GAIL for development of a 2655 Km long Jaddishpur-Haldia/Bokaro-Dhamra Gas Pipeline (JHBDPL) project. This pipeline will transport Natural Gas to the industrial, commercial, domestic and transport sectors in the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.
- **An Integrated Refinery-cum-Petrochemical Complex:** Oil Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) namely Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) have decided to set up an integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex with a refining capacity of 60 MMTPA (Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum) at Babulwadi, Taluka Rajapur in Ratnagiri District in the state of Maharashtra.
- **Background:** The establishment of a hub is an attempt to meet operators' demands for the adoption of a market-based gas-pricing regime. But India faces challenges in making the dream a reality, amid concerns over third-party access and competition.
- **The gas hub plan** ties in with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to boost the share of natural gas in India's energy mix to 15% by 2030, from just over 6% now.
- **Domestic supply** is also increasing. ONGC, India's largest producer, supplied 23.5bn cubic meters of gas in the 2017-18 financial year and plans to almost double this within the next four years.
- **The Indian authorities**, are considering overhauling the policy of fixed domestic gas prices, currently based on a formula derived from prices in the US, Canada, UK and Russia. Delhi sees itself as a potential candidate for Asia's largest LNG trading hub, in a region that lacks accurate benchmarks reflecting Asian gas fundamentals.

India's ranking on major global indices in 2018- a quick recap:

- **In World Bank's Ease of Doing Business** rankings portray, we rank 77th on a list of 190 economies that are doing well for businesses. India improved its rank substantially on the Ease of Doing Business index from 132 in 2016, to 100 in 2017, and further to 77 in 2018.
- **In the Human Development Index (HDI)**, compiled by the United Nations Development Program, taking parameters like education, health and income into account, India has done slightly better than the previous year as it climbed up a spot from 131 to 130 out of 189 nations.
- **In Happiness Index**, India slipped 11 spots from 122nd rank of 2017 to become the 133rd happiest nation in the world. It is an annual publication carried out by United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network since 2012.
- **In the Global Peace Index**, India has performed poorly and has done just a shade better than its previous performance of 137 as we rank 136 this time. Iceland, New Zealand, Austria, Denmark and Canada are the most peaceful countries, according to GPI.
- **Global Hunger Index** has also shown a fall in India's ranking from the past year. While India ranked 100th in a list of 119 countries last year, the 2018 performance is worse as now it is on 103rd spot. According to the report, "a ranking below 100 shows that a country's undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality levels are at the highest level."



Year End Review: Ministry of Earth Sciences.

- The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** is mandated to provide services for weather, climate, ocean and coastal state, hydrology, seismology, and natural hazards; to explore marine living and non-living resources in a sustainable way and to explore the three polar-regions (Arctic, Antarctic and Himalayas). Several major milestones have been accomplished under various schemes of the Ministry of Earth Sciences during the last four years and especially in the year 2018. These achievements include a wide variety of services that are relevant to the society. Some of the most important achievements in this context are given below.
- High Performance Computing (HPC)** The Ministry of Earth Sciences has augmented its HPC facility by 6.8 Peta Flops (PF) which has been installed at two of its constituent units namely, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune with 4.0 Peta Flops capacity and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), Noida with 2.8 Peta Flops capacity. The HPC facility 'Pratyush' at IITM and "MIHIR" at NCMRWF were dedicated to the nation by Union Minister for Earth Sciences, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, on 8 January 2018 and 30 January 2018, respectively. With this facility, a paradigm shift in weather and climate modeling activity for operational weather forecast has been achieved.
- India's ranking** has moved from the 368th position to around the top 30 in the Top500 list of HPC facilities in the world. India is now placed at the 4th position after Japan, UK and USA for dedicated HPC resources for weather/climate community.
- This facility** is part of Ministry's continuous endeavor to provide world class forecast services to the citizens of India through its various operational and research and development activities. The Ministry of Earth Sciences has developed several services for societal benefits catering to a variety of sectors of economy by building state-of-the-art systems for multi-hazard risk reduction from cyclones; floods/droughts; heat/cold waves; earthquakes; tsunamis; etc.
- Improved Weather and Cyclone Predictions** A very high resolution (12 km) state of the art Global Ensemble Prediction Systems (EPS) were commissioned by MoES on 01 June 2018. The resolution (12 km) of the EPS is the highest among all the operational global operational weather forecast centres in the world. The Ensemble forecasts enhance the weather information being provided by the current models by quantifying the uncertainties in the weather forecasts and generate probabilistic forecasts.
- The quality of weather services** by the Ministry has shown appreciable improvements during the past 4 years. Specifically, noticeable improvements have been achieved in prediction skills of heavy rainfall and tropical cyclones.
- The track forecast** error during 2014-17 has been 89, 142, 207 km against 125, 202, 268 km during 2007-13 for 24, 48 and 72 hrs lead period respectively. The period during 2014-17 registered a decrease in track forecast error by 29, 30 & 23% as compared to 2007-13 for 24, 48 and 72 hours lead period respectively.
- During 2018**, six tropical cyclones formed over North Indian Ocean (NIO) against the normal frequency of 4.5 cyclones. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) appreciated IMD for tropical cyclone advisory services during Cyclonic Storm SAGAR over Arabian Sea (16-21 May), Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm MEKUNU over Arabian Sea (21-27 May), VSCS Luban (06-15 October) and VSCS Titli (08-13 October) which helped minimize the impact and saved many lives
- A Mumbai Weather** Live Mobile App has been developed by collating ground measurements recorded by IMD and the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, observations from SAFAR-Mumbai, to provide live location specific information on rainfall. Currently, the app covers about 100 sites spread across Mumbai city, suburban areas, Navi Mumbai and surrounding areas.
- Agro-Meteorological Advisory Services (AAS)** The Ministry in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) provides the district level Agromet Advisory Services (AAS) for the benefit of farmers. Farmers make use of these services for planning the operations like sowing, irrigation, application of fertilizer and pesticide, harvest and protection of crops from weather disasters. Currently, about 40 million farmers are receiving crop specific agro-meteorological advisories in vernacular languages. During monsoon 2018, Experimental Block level agromet advisory services has been started from existing AMFUs in 200 blocks of 50 districts.
- Services to Power Sector** India Meteorological Department (IMD) and POSOCO have launched a web portal dedicated exclusively to energy sector. A Reference Document on Weather Portal for Energy Sector was launched by Union Minister of State (IC), Ministry of Power and New & Renewable Energy, Shri RK Singh on 29 August, 2018. As the demand of power consumption changes due to change in weather conditions, the forecasts of weather including temperature, wind and rainfall helped in better load assessment including generation and distribution of power.

- **Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) Advisories** The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) continued to provide its flagship service of Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories, which contains information on the regions of fish availability. PFZ advisories are generated based on the satellite data on Sea Surface Temperature (SST) and ocean colour along with other environmental parameters such as water clarity and sea level. There was a remarkable growth in user community during 2018
- **The advisories** are being disseminated in smart map and text form on daily basis, depending on satellite data availability, except fishing-ban period and during adverse sea-state. During the period Jan 1-Oct 25, 2018, multilingual Potential Fishing Zones (PFZ) advisories were made available on 225 days. In addition, during the FY 2017-18, INCOIS provided 220 Tuna advisories also, that included information on the maximum fishing depth.
- **Desalination of water** Union Minister of Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan laid the foundation stone for the world's first ever Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) powered desalination project in Kavaratti, Lakshadweep on 22.10.2018.
- **OTEC is a renewable form of energy** utilizing thermal gradient present across the ocean depth. The existing desalination plants in Lakshadweep put up by NIOT, utilize diesel generators for their operation. The proposed plant will utilize clean and green energy provided by OTEC to power desalination and this plant will be set up at Kavaratti. This would not only pave the way for setting up of more environmentally friendly self-sustainable desalination plants but also help in scaling up the OTEC technology for mainland uses.
- **NIOT also has taken** up the task of establishing 1.5 Lakh liters per day capacity LTTD plants in Amini, Androth, Chetlat, Kadamat, Kalpeni, and Kiltan Islands of UT Lakshadweep at a cost of Rs. 187.87 crores with a project duration of 2 years.
- **Dr Harsh Vardhan**, Union Minister along with the Lakshadweep Administrator at the Foundation Stone laying ceremony at Kavaratti.
- **Ocean Science and Technology for Islands** The Atal Centre for Ocean Science and Technology for Islands in Port Blair was inaugurated by Union Minister for Science & Technology, Environment & Forest and Earth Sciences, Dr.HarshVardhan, on 15th September 2018. The activities are focused towards offshore open sea cage culture for marine fishes, deep sea microbial technology aimed at the production of novel bioactive compounds from actinobacteria and other deep sea microorganisms, isolation and production of bio-molecules from macro algae and seawater quality monitoring.
- **Coastal Research** Recognizing the importance of diverse and productive ecosystems of Indian Coast such as estuaries, lagoons, mangroves, mudflats, rocky shores, coral reefs, MoES had reorganized the existing centre into a Centre of Excellence for Coastal Research in April 2018 at Chennai. The National Centre for Climate research (NCCR) is an attached office of the ministry with a mandate to address societal needs of the country.The NCCR would provide scientific and technical support to the coastal states for conservation and sustainable management of the resources to address blue economy in association with the coastal states. This would provide a strong institutional and scientific backing to solve the critical coastal issues and aid in the Nation building exercise.
- **Dr. Harsh Vardhan**, Union Minister of Ministry of Science & Technology, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Ministry of Earth Sciences laid the foundation stone for the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) and a joint training facility of NCCR and India Meteorological Department (IMD) at Dolphin Hill, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh on 2nd November, 2018.
- **Under the Sea Water Quality Monitoring (SWQM)** program along Indian Coast, NCCR has seasonal data on >25 parameters pertaining to physico-chemical, biological and microbiological characteristics of seawater and sediment are systematically collected and analyzed using standard protocols. Water (surface, mid-depth and bottom) and sediment samples are being collected at each location at 0/0.5 km (shore), 2/3 km (near-shore) and 5 km (offshore) distance from the shore. Based on the data collected under SWQM program, a status report on, "Seawater quality at selected locations along India coast" was released on 27th July, 2018 in New Delhi on the occasion of Foundation Day of MoES.
- **The coastline of India** is undergoing changes due to various anthropogenic and natural interventions. Population explosion along the coastal area has added to an increase demand for coastal resources. Precise information on shoreline changes is essential to address the various coastal problems such as coastal erosion; closure of river / lagoons /creeks mouths, etc.NCCR has prepared a status report on shoreline changes for the period 26 years (1990 to 2016). It provides details of shoreline changes, 3 types of map, shoreline vulnerability for erosion /accretion, land loss / land gain etc. for entire mainland coast of India. This report will be very useful to coastal managers and other stakeholders in identifying critical area for coastal management to safeguard property and population living in coastal areas.
- **Metropolitan Air Quality and Weather Services** Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union minister of S&T, Earth Sciences, Environment, Forecast and Climate Change inaugurated an air quality monitoring and forecasting station for the benefit of the citizens of one of the most crowded locations of Delhi in Chandni Chowk near Town Hall which will also monitor PM1, Hg and UV-radiations, in addition to routine air pollutants and weather parameters.
- **Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi:** A new early warning system of air quality in Delhi developed in collaboration with National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), USA was launched on 15 October 2018. The system will assimilate data from around 36 monitoring stations run by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), and System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR). Information from satellites on stubble burning in northwest India or dust storms along with the prevalent meteorological factors will help improve the initial conditions of the dynamical chemistry transport model thereby resulting in accurate prediction of air-quality. This newly developed system will enable the Graded Response Action Plan to be implemented in advance.
- **Chennai Flood Mitigation** National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Chennai and Revenue Administration, Disaster Management and Mitigation Department is to provide technical support in the areas related to Coastal Flood Warning System for Greater Chennai Corporation area, which will be extended to the new CMA area in a Phased manner.
- **NCCR has developed the Chennai Flood Warning System (C-FLOWS)** for Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC). The design of the system involved coupling of regional weather forecast model, tide forecast model, tidal flood model, along with flood forecasting and inundation models. As the expert system is multi-disciplinary in nature, multiple institutions and organizations were involved. Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB) is the lead institution along with participation of the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM), Anna University, the ESSO-National Centre of Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF)

and the ESSO-India Meteorological Department (IMD). The system will provide information about flood-levels ward-wise within 1 hour (for real time simulation) and 30 minutes (from expert system) after the weather forecast is received. The updates will be provided every 6 hours for deterministic forecasts and 24 hours for quantile forecasts.

- **C-FLOWS** will be tested for 2018 Northeast Monsoon situation and would provide scientific advisory through development of a dashboard and Mobile application connecting risk forecasts.
- **Coastal Engineering** Design of the Offshore reef with beach nourishment for coastal protection at Puducherry : Further to the gain of beach width of 60m formed near the northern side, a submerged steel wedge was successfully installed as a near shore submerged reef in the northern side. It is a triangular steel wedge, of 800 tonnes, with dimension 50m x 60m x 2.5m and was successfully installed at 2.5 m water depth off Puducherry coast as part of Beach Restoration project on August 23, 2018. The Beach Restoration project in Puducherry has been successfully completed. Demonstration of submerged reef at Puducherry has resulted in formation of wide beach.
- **A workshop on Puducherry** beach Restoration was organised on 11th October 2018 at Puducherry. Dr. Kiran Bedi, IPS, (Retd.) Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Puducherry unveiled the video on Puducherry Beach restoration project and Shri.V.Narayanasamy, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Puducherry released the Brochure about the Project. The work carried out was appreciated by the Government of Puducherry, media and public.
- **Transfer of Technology (ToT) Technology Transfer to industry in April 2018** NIOT signed an agreement for Transfer of Technology (ToT) of Robo coastal observer to CT control technology, through NRDC, on 27th April 2018, at Hyderabad in the presence of Secretary MoES. NIOT signed an agreement for Transfer of Technology (ToT) of Remotely Operable Vehicle to L&T heavy industries through NRDC, on 27th April 2018, at Hyderabad in the presence of Secretary MoES. Transfer of Technology of the patented transducer (patent no 278301) was given to Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and is in production level. NIOT has signed a MoU through NRDC, for technology transfer of Ocean drifter and expandable CTD to Indian industries – M/s.Norinco, Mumbai, M/s.Astra Microwave, Hyderabad and M/s.Azista Industries Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad on 31.8.2018, in the presence of Secretary MoES.
- **Microzonation of selected cities:** The Seismic Microzonation work related to Geophysical investigations has been initiated for the four selected cities, namely, Chennai, Bhubaneswar, Coimbatore, and Mangalore. In addition, microzonation for 8 more cities, considered to be important from seismic point of view, is being taken up separately on priority through academic and research organizations in India. The list includes Patna, Meerut, Amritsar, Agra, Varanasi, Lucknow, Kanpur and Dhanbad. Ministry has also identified new thrust areas and made strategy to further improve/strengthen and to provide the nation with best possible services.

Reducing Carbon Emission by Altering the Method of Farming

- **Initiative have been taken** to make agriculture more adaptive and resilient to climate variability and in the process to reduce carbon emission. Important initiatives in this regard include crop diversification programme under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI). Other supporting programmes viz. Soil Health Card (SHC), Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), Mission Organic for Value Chain Development for North East (MOVCD), Rainfed Area Development (RAD), Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF) and National Bamboo Mission (NBM) are also being implemented under the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), which is one of the eight Mission under the National Action Plan for Climatic Change (NAPCC).
- **Soil, water and crop management practices that reduce carbon emission include:** (i) Increasing the area under System of Rice Intensification (SRI) as an alternative to transplanted paddy.
- (ii) **Deployment of zero tillage** drill machines and other residue management equipment which enable planting of rabi crop in the standing residue of rice crop to avoid its burning.
- (iii) **Alternate wetting and drying**, direct seeded rice system of rice cultivation, use of slow release nitrogen fertilizers, integrated nutrient management practices, leaf colour chart-based nitrogen application, use of urea super granules etc.
- (iv) **Mandatory Neem coating of urea.**
- (v) **Promotion of micro irrigation** under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)-Per Drop More Crop.
- (vi) **Planting of trees** under National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI), Sub-Mission on Agro Forestry (SMAF) and National Bamboo Mission (NBM).
- (vii) **45 models** of Integrated Farming System (IFS) have been developed for replication in Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and in the States for enabling climate resilient agriculture.
- (viii) **Climate resilient villages** have been developed by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), one in each of 151 districts. Climate Vulnerability Atlas has been prepared under National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA). District Agriculture Contingency Plans have been developed for 633 districts in order to give real time agro advisories for overcoming climate risks.

Bhima Koregaon anniversary

- **About the Bhima- Koregaon battle:** A battle was fought in Bhima Koregaon, a district in Pune with a strong historical Dalit connection, between the Peshwa forces and the British on January 1, 1818. The British army, which comprised mainly of Dalit soldiers, fought the upper caste-dominated Peshwa army. The British troops defeated the Peshwa army.
- **Outcomes of the battle:** The victory was seen as a win against caste-based discrimination and oppression. Peshwas were notorious for their oppression and persecution of Mahar dalits. The victory in the battle over Peshwas gave dalits a moral victory a victory against caste-based discrimination and oppression and sense of identity. However, the divide and rule policy of the British created multiple fissures in Indian society which is even visible today in the way of excessive caste and religious discrimination which needs to be checked keeping in mind the tenets of the Constitution.
- **Why Bhima Koregaon is seen as a Dalit symbol?** The battle has come to be seen as a symbol of Dalit pride because a large number of soldiers in the Company force were the Mahar Dalits. Since the Peshwas, who were Brahmins, were seen as oppressors of Dalits, the victory of the Mahar soldiers over the the Peshwa force is seen as Dalit assertion. On 1 January 1927, B.R. Ambedkar visited the memorial obelisk erected on the spot which bears the names of the dead including nearly two dozen Mahar soldiers. The men who fought in the battle of Koregaon were the Mahars, and the Mahars are Untouchables.

Indian Bridge Management System

- **What is it?** IBMS crates an inventory of all bridges in the country and rate their structural condition so that timely repair and rehabilitation work can be carried out based on the criticality of the structure. IBMS is the largest platform in the world owned by a single owner, with database that could exceed 1,50,000 bridge structures. So far 1,15,000 bridges have been inventorized, of which 85,000 are culverts and the rest are bridges.
- **Why was it necessary?** Lack of any data base on bridges in the country has led to a situation where there is no clear idea about the exact number and location of bridges. Hence, it has become difficult to maintain bridges in proper working condition. Poor condition of bridges hampers efficient transport and has also led to accidents and loss of lives on several occasions.
- **How it operates?** During inventory creation each bridge is assigned a unique identification number or National Identity Number based on the state, RTO zone and whether it is situated on an National Highway, State Highway or is a district road. Then the precise location of the bridge in terms of latitude-longitude is collected through GPS and based on this, the bridge is assigned a Bridge Location Number. Thereafter, engineering characteristics like the design, materials, type of bridge, its age, loading, traffic lane, length, width of carriage way etc are collected and are used to assign a Bridge Classification Number to the structure.
- **These are then used to do a structural rating** of the structure on a scale of 0 to 9, and each bridge is assigned a Structural Rating Number. In addition to the structural rating, the bridges are also being assigned Socio-Economic Bridge Rating Number which will decide the importance of the structure in relation to its contribution to daily socio-economic activity of the area in its vicinity. Based on this inventory IBMS will analyse data and identify bridges that need attention. Further inspection will be carried out wherever required to improve the operational availability of the structure, enhance its life and prioritize repair and rehabilitation work. The data will help to decide which bridge needs critical attention, or which needs to be rebuilt.

Saubhagya scheme

- **Under the Saubhagya scheme**, the target of 100% electrification of the state was to be achieved by December 31, 2018. However, the State Power Utility (SPU) achieved the target on December 27, 2018 itself.
- **About SAUBHAGYA Scheme:** Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – ‘Saubhagya’ was launched in September, 2017. Under Saubhagya free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and poor families in urban areas will be provided.
- **Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) has been designated as nodal agency for the Saubhagya scheme.** The scheme aims to achieve universal household electrification in all parts of the country. All DISCOMs including Private Sector DISCOMs, State Power Departments and RE Cooperative Societies shall be eligible for financial assistance under the scheme in line with Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY). Eligibility: The prospective

beneficiary households for free electricity connections under the scheme would be identified using SECC 2011 data. However, un-electrified households not covered under SECC data would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs. 500 which shall be recovered by DISCOMs in 10 instalments through electricity bill.

- **Scope of the Scheme:** Providing last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all un-electrified households in rural areas. Providing Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) based standalone system for un-electrified households located in remote and inaccessible villages / habitations, where grid extension is not feasible or cost effective. Providing last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all remaining economically poor un-electrified households in urban areas. Non-poor urban households are excluded from this scheme. Mains Question: Electrification, in contemporary times, is a basic human necessity. With reference to the scheme Saubhagya, examine the feasibility of a national universal electrification program.

Kasturirangan report on Western Ghats

- **Important observations made by the committee:** Over 56,000 square kilometres of ecologically sensitive areas (ESA) in the Western Ghats could not be earmarked as 'no-go' zones due to State governments' 'insensitivity'. The recent monsoon floods in Kerala and parts of Karnataka should serve as alarm bells for the administrations in the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which have failed to mark ESA in the Western Ghats.
- **Background:** The panel had examined issues regarding the categorisation of the Western Ghats as ESA as per the recommendations of two committees led by Madhav Gadgil and K. Kasturirangan. The panel examined 62 assurances during its deliberations with various State governments and other organisations, and had visited Pune, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru, before preparing its report.
- **What next?** The committee is of the view that implementation of the recommendations of the Kasturirangan report is only possible with active support of local population. It also requires consultation with the State government at micro level to achieve the objectives of saving the Western Ghats.
- **What did the Gadgil Committee say?** It defined the boundaries of the Western Ghats for the purposes of ecological management. It proposed that this entire area be designated as ecologically sensitive area (ESA). Within this area, smaller regions were to be identified as ecologically sensitive zones (ESZ) I, II or III based on their existing condition and nature of threat. It proposed to divide the area into about 2,200 grids, of which 75 per cent would fall under ESZ I or II or under already existing protected areas such as wildlife sanctuaries or natural parks. The committee proposed a Western Ghats Ecology Authority to regulate these activities in the area.
- **What was the need for the subsequent Kasturirangan Committee?** None of the six concerned states agreed with the recommendations of the Gadgil Committee, which submitted its report in August 2011. In August 2012, then Environment Minister constituted a High-Level Working Group on Western Ghats under Kasturirangan to "examine" the Gadgil Committee report in a "holistic and multidisciplinary fashion in the light of responses received" from states, central ministries and others.
- **Recommendations of Kasturirangan Committee:** A ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining. No new thermal power projects, but hydro power projects allowed with restrictions. A ban on new polluting industries. Building and construction projects up to 20,000 sq m was to be allowed but townships were to be banned. Forest diversion could be allowed with extra safeguards.

ISRO launches Samwad with Students on New Year Day

- **As part of the enhanced outreach programme** of Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), a new platform named "Samwad with Students" (SwS) was launched in Bengaluru.
- **About the SwS Initiative:** ISRO aims to engage youngsters across India to capture their scientific temperament. The new conversation mission will inspire students cutting across schools and colleges. The first SwS event saw 40 wards and 10 teachers from select schools interact with ISRO Chairman Dr K Sivan at the Anthariksh Bhavan.

Institutions in News- NALSA:

- **Why in News?** President Ram Nath Kovind has nominated Justice AK Sikri as Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

- **About NALSA:** NALSA has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to provide free legal services to weaker sections of society. The aim is to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reasons of economic or other disabilities.
- **Important functions performed by NALSA:** NALSA organises Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes. NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalised and excluded groups and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes.
- **Services** provided by the agency include free legal aid in civil and criminal matters for the poor and marginalised people who cannot afford the services of a lawyer in any court or tribunal. Free legal services include provision of aid and advice to beneficiaries to access the benefits under the welfare statutes and schemes and to ensure access to justice in any other manner.

‘Prayagraj’:

- **Context:** The Union Home Ministry has approved the proposal of the Uttar Pradesh Government to rename Allahabad as Prayagraj.
- **Background:** The city of Allahabad was originally known as Prayag in ancient times. Between 1574 and 1583, the 16th-century Mughal emperor Akbar founded a fort near the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna, known as Sangam, as he was impressed with its strategic position. Hence, Akbar named the fort and its neighbourhood as Iahabad, which meant the “Abode of God”, inspired by the religion he had founded, Din-i-Ilahi. In the later years, Akbar’s grandson Shah Jahan renamed the entire city as Allahabad. However, the area near the Sangam, which is the site of the Kumbh Mela, continued to be called Prayag.
- **Women’s Wall in Kerala:** Context: Kerala government had on January 1st organised the Women’s Wall or Vanitha Mathil to “protect renaissance values.
- **WHAT IS IT?** Around thirty lakh women formed a human chain across the National Highway from Kasargod to Thiruvananthapuram, around 620-kilometre long, extending their support to the state government’s resolve to implement the Supreme Court’s verdict allowing women of all ages access to Sabarimala and to protect the secular and progressive values of Kerala. Organised by the government and supported by various social organisations having links with the renaissance movement, the Women’s Wall is an attempt by the government to defend the state from communal forces.
- **Survey on Retail Payment Habits of Individuals (SRPHI):** What is it? It is a survey launched by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The survey will capture payment habits of individuals in six cities, including four metropolitan towns.
- **Key facts:** The survey will cover a sample of 6,000 individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds across six cities — Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Guwahati. The survey seeks qualitative responses from individuals on their payment habits. The findings may provide some idea about awareness and usage habits of digital payment products.

Panda Bonds Pakistan:

- **Context:** For the first time in history, the federal cabinet has approved a new financial strategy called Panda-Bonds in Pakistan. These bonds will become the new and favorable method to raise foreign exchange.
- **What Are Panda Bonds?** A Panda bond is a Chinese renminbi-denominated bond from a non-Chinese issuer, sold in the People’s Republic of China. These bonds were first issued in 2005 by the International Finance Corporation and the Asian Development Bank.
- **The Chinese government** had been negotiating for several years about implementation details before permitting the sale of such bonds; they had been concerned about the possible effects on their currency peg.
- **How Will Panda Bonds Benefit Pakistan?** The bonds will help Pakistan’s government to diversify the current investor base in capital market insurance and will also be used as a source of raising Renminbi. Furthermore, the tenor, size and pricing will be determined according to the market response at the time of issuance.

Cinereous vulture:

- **Context:** Bird watchers and researchers recently sighted Cinereous vulture in Hazaribagh in Jharkhand.
- **Background:** During the winter, the Cinereous vulture migrates from the mountainous regions of Europe and Asia to warmer places, including India.
- **Key facts:** Cinereous vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) draws its name from “monachus”, which means hooded (like a monk) in Latin. It is also known as the black vulture, monk vulture, or Eurasian black vulture. It is classified as Near Threatened under the IUCN Red List.



Year End Review – 2018- Ministry of Finance

- **The Indian Government** has made significant strides in the last 4 years in taking India to new heights in terms of the welfare of the citizenry, the overall structure & growth of the economy, and creating a strong presence as an emerging global power.
- **To fuel such achievements**, the Government has worked tirelessly for shouldering a number of bold and important socio-economic reforms. The Government has undertaken its reform drive with the spirit of inclusiveness of the marginalized and hitherto socio-economically neglected classes in the overall development process. To this end, right at the beginning of its term, the Government came-up with the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in August 2014, for giving space to the deprived classes into the formal banking system and making Financial Inclusion as its prime goal. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana's success has led to the creation of the much needed financial infrastructure, which serves as a runway for taking-off other Social Security Schemes like Atal Pension Yojana (APY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY).
- **Taking a step further towards** up-liftment of the neglected, the Government recognized the need for targeted welfare reforms to cater to special needs of certain sections of the society. In this direction, the Government came-up with Pradhan Mantri Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, which provides financial security to the girl child when she grows up.
- **Not only financial security**, but also the financial independence of the women was taken care of through Stand Up India Scheme, which expands its ambit to Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes. Stand Up India gives subsidized loans to harness and ignite the latent entrepreneurial zeal of the hitherto disadvantaged communities.
- **Financial needs of all the stakeholders** ranging from the budding entrepreneurs to the hard-working farmers have also been catered to through various initiatives. An important initiative in this direction is the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana. During the Financial Year 2018-19, the number of loans sanctioned are 2,81,08,814 with total amount sanctioned worth Rs. 1,48,503.57 Crore, with total amount disbursed Rs. 1,42,009.91 Crore.
- **Alongside the farmer's needs** have also been addressed. The Kisan Credit Card Scheme (KCC) was strengthened for contributing towards the liberation of peasantry from the shackles of exploitative money lenders by improving their access to formal credit.
- **Reforms and initiatives like GST**, Demonetization, Operation Clean Money and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code have made the Indian economy more efficient and transparent and have ensured financial discipline along with better compliance.
- **The success of Government's policies** is further reaffirmed and underscored when the International Organizations like the World Bank and IMF recognize India as the fastest growing Emerging Economy in the world and applaud the resilient and stable growth India has witnessed.
- **According to a recent World Bank report**, India is a top improver in the Ease of Doing Business Rankings for the second year in a row. India has improved 65 places from 142 to 77 in span of last 4 years which is a remarkable achievement in itself.

Department of Economic Affairs (DEA)

- **The Indian Economy** is on track to maintain a high growth rate in the current global environment. The share of Indian economy in world (measured as a ratio of India's GDP to world's GDP at current US\$) increased from 2.6 percent in 2014 to 3.2 percent in 2017 (as per World Development Indicators database). The average share of Indian economy in world during 1960 to 2013 was 1.8 percent. The average growth of the Indian economy during 2014-15 to 2017-18 was 7.3 per cent, fastest among the major economies in the world.
- **Indian economy** is projected to be the fastest growing major economy in 2018-19 and 2019-20 (International Monetary Fund October 2018 database). This is borne by GDP growth of 7.6 per cent in the first half of 2018-19. The Second Quarter has seen a reasonable overall GDP growth of 7.1%. The H-1 2018-19 growth of the GDP is 7.6% and the H-1 GVA growth is 7.4%. The Growth in the Second Quarter is on higher base compared to the growth of the First Quarter.

- **The Manufacturing Growth** on a base of 7.1% in Q2 2017-18 has been 7.4% in Q2 of 2018-19. The Construction Sector has grown by 7.8%. The Gross Fixed Capital Formation as a ratio of GDP has increased by almost 1.3 percentage points over Q2 of last year. The Exports for Q-2 have grown by 13.4%. The Government consumption for the Quarter has also significantly increased by 12.7%.
- **This is ratified in the reports of International Organizations like World Economic Forum.** As per the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018 Report of the United Nations, the outlook for India remains largely positive, underpinned by robust private consumption and public investment as well as ongoing structural reforms.
- **According to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2018 Report,** India's ranking improved by 65 positions to 77th rank in 2018.
- **The Government of India** has taken various initiatives to improve the confidence in the Indian economy and boost the growth of the economy and which, inter-alia, include; fillip to manufacturing, concrete measures for transport and power sectors as well as other urban and rural infrastructure, comprehensive reforms in the foreign direct investment policy, special package for textile industry, push to infrastructure development by giving infrastructure status to affordable housing and focus on coastal connectivity.
- **Inflation during 2017-18 Averaged to the Lowest in the Last Six Years** Inflation in the country continued to moderate during 2017-18. Consumer Price Index(CPI) based headline inflation averaged 3.3 per cent during the period which is the lowest in the last six financial years. This has been stated in the Economic Survey 2017-18 placed in Parliament by the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley. This progress is a result of a number of initiatives and reforms undertaken by the government which follows in the subsequent pages.

Curbing Black Money

- **The Government** first targeted the black money outside India. Asset holders were asked to bring this money back on payment of penal tax. Those who failed to do so are being prosecuted under the Black Money Act. Details of all accounts and assets abroad which have reached the Government resulted in action against the violators.
- **Steps for Curbing the Black Money stashed abroad has led to Positive Results** The Government of India has taken various steps for curbing the black money stashed abroad, which has led to positive results. These steps include the following:
 - **India** has been a leading force in the efforts to forge a multi-lateral regime for proactive sharing of Financial Information known as Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) which will greatly assist the global efforts to combat tax evasion. The AEOI based on Common Reporting Standard (CRS) has commenced from 2017 enabling India to receive financial account information of Indian residents in other countries.
 - **India** has also entered into information sharing agreement with the USA under the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) of USA. The exchanges under FATCA have taken place for the financial years 2014, 2015 and 2016.
 - **Indian Money** in Swiss Bank: The data collected by Swiss National Bank in collaboration with Bank for International Settlements (BIS) shows that the loans and deposits of Indians, other than Banks, in the Swiss banks decreased by 34.5% in the year 2017 as compared to 2016. Further, there has been significant reduction in Swiss non-bank loans and deposits of Indians by 80.2% between 2013 and 2017.

Unearthing Benami Property

- **Income Tax Department steps-up actions under Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act** : Benami properties of more than Rs. 3,500 crore in more than 900 cases attached
- **Cabinet approves appointment** of Adjudicating Authority and establishment of Appellate Tribunal under Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988. The approval will result in effective and better administration of cases referred to the Adjudicating Authority and speedy disposal of appeals filed against the order of the Adjudicating Authority before the Appellate Tribunal.
- **New Benami Transactions Informants Reward Scheme, 2018 was launched by the Income Tax Department'** Under the Benami Transactions Informants Reward Scheme, 2018, a person can get reward up to Rs. One crore for giving specific information in prescribed manner to the Joint or Additional Commissioners of Benami Prohibition Units (BPU) in Investigation Directorates of Income Tax Department about benami transactions and properties as well as proceeds from such properties which are actionable under Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988, as amended by Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016.

Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill

- **With the assent of the President of India**, the Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance, 2018 was promulgated; New law laid down the measures to empower Indian authorities to attach and confiscate the proceeds of crime associated with economic offenders and the properties of the economic offenders.
- **The Union Cabinet chaired** by Prime Minister Shri NarendraModi, has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Finance to introduce the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 in Parliament. The Bill would help in laying down measures to deter economic offenders from evading the process of Indian law by remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts. The cases where the total value involved in such offences is Rs.100 crore or more, will come under the purview of this Bill.
- **Impact:** The Bill is expected to re-establish the rule of law with respect to the fugitive economic offenders as they would be forced to return to India to face trial for scheduled offences. This would also help the banks and other financial institutions to achieve higher recovery from financial defaults committed by such fugitive economic offenders, improving the financial health of such institutions.
- **ShellCompanies** Task Force on Shell Companies took pro-active and coordinated steps to check the menace of shell companies: The major achievements of the Task Force include the compilation of a database of shell companies by SFIO. This database, as on date, comprises of 3 lists, viz the Confirmed List, Derived List and Suspect List. The Confirmed List has a total of 16,537 confirmed shell companies on the basis of the information received from the various Law Enforcement Agencies of the companies found to be involved in illegal activities.

Push to MSME sector:

- **Prime Minister Shri NarendraModi launched historic Support and Outreach Initiative for MSME Sector** · 59 minute loan portal to enable easy access to credit for MSMEs · Mandatory 25 percent procurement from MSMEs by CPSEs · Ordinance for simplifying procedures for minor offences under
- **Companies Act** The Prime Minister, Shri NarendraModi, launched a historic support and outreach programme for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector. As part of this programme, the Prime Minister unveiled 12 key initiatives which will help the growth, expansion and facilitation of MSMEs across the country.
- **The Prime Minister** said that the success of economic reforms launched by the Union Government can be gauged from the rise in India's "Ease of Doing Business Rankings," from 142 to 77 in four years.
- **The Prime Minister** said that there are five key aspects for facilitating the MSME sector. These include access to credit, access to market, technology upgradation, ease of doing business, and a sense of security for employees. He said that as a Diwali gift for the sector, the 12 announcements he is making, will address each of these five categories.

Access to Credit

- **As the First Announcement**, the Prime Minister announced the launch of the 59 minute loan portal to enable easy access to credit for MSMEs. He said that loans uptoRs. 1 crore can be granted in-principle approval through this portal, in just 59 minutes. He said a link to this portal will be made available through the GST portal. The Prime Minister asserted that in New India, no one should be compelled to visit a bank branch repeatedly.
- **The Prime Minister** mentioned the Second Announcement as a 2 percent interest subvention for all GST registered MSMEs, on fresh or incremental loans. For exporters who receive loans in the pre-shipment and post-shipment period, the Prime Minister announced an increase in interest rebate from 3 percent to 5 percent.
- **The Third Announcement** made by the Prime Minister was that all companies with a turnover more than Rs. 500 crore, must now compulsorily be brought on the Trade Receivables e-Discounting System (TReDS). He said that joining this portal will enable entrepreneurs to access credit from banks, based on their upcoming receivables. This will resolve their problems of cash cycle.

- **Access to Markets** The Prime Minister said that on access to markets for entrepreneurs, the Union Government has taken a number of steps already. In this context, he made his Fourth Announcement that Public Sector Companies have now been asked to compulsorily procure 25 percent, instead of 20 percent of their total purchases, from MSMEs. The Prime Minister said his Fifth Announcement is related to women entrepreneurs. He said that out of the 25 percent procurement mandated from MSMEs, 3 percent must now be reserved for women entrepreneurs.
- **The Prime Minister** said that more than 1.5 lakh suppliers have now registered with GeM, out of which 40,000 are MSMEs. He said transactions worth more than Rs. 14,000 crore have been made so far through GeM. He said the Sixth Announcement is that all Public Sector Undertakings of the Union Government must now compulsorily be a part of GeM. He said they should also get all their vendors registered on GeM.

Technology Upgradation

- **Coming to technological upgradation**, the Prime Minister said that tool rooms across the country are a vital part of product design. His seventh announcement was that 20 hubs will be formed across the country, and 100 spokes in the form of tool rooms will be established.
- **Ease of Doing Business** On Ease of Doing Business, the Prime Minister's Eighth Announcement was related to pharma companies. He said clusters will be formed of pharma MSMEs. He said 70 percent cost of establishing these clusters will be borne by the Union Government. The Prime Minister's Ninth Announcement on Simplification of Government Procedures was that the return under 8 labour laws and 10 Union regulations must now be filed only once a year.
- **The Prime Minister's Tenth Announcement** was that now the establishments to be visited by an Inspector will be decided through a computerised random allotment.
- **The Prime Minister** noted that as part of establishing a unit, an entrepreneur needs two clearances namely, environmental clearance and consent to establish. His Eleventh Announcement was that under air pollution and water pollution laws, now both these have been merged as a single consent. He further said that the return will be accepted through self-certification.
- **As the Twelfth Announcement**, the Prime Minister mentioned that an Ordinance had been brought, under which, for minor violations under the Companies Act, the entrepreneur will no longer have to approach the Courts, but can correct them through simple procedures.

Social Security for MSME Sector Employees

- **The Prime Minister** also spoke of social security for the MSME sector employees. He said that a mission will be launched to ensure that they have Jan Dhan Accounts, Provident Fund and Insurance.
- **The Prime Minister** said that these decisions would go a long way in strengthening the MSME sector in India. He said the implementation of this Outreach Programme will be intensively monitored over the next 100 days.
- **SIDBI** launched a National Level Entrepreneurship Awareness Campaign, Udyam Abhilasha (उद्यम अभिलाषा) in 115 Aspirational Districts identified by NITI Aayog in 28 States and reaching to around 15,000 youth.
- **Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2018 -19:** The Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, has decided to issue Sovereign Gold Bonds-2018-19. The Sovereign Gold Bonds will be issued every month from October 2018 to February 2019.
- **Fifteenth Finance Commission** constituted a High Level Group to examine the strengths and weaknesses for enabling balanced expansion of Health Sector. The Fifteenth Finance Commission has constituted a High Level Group consisting of eminent experts from across the country in Health Sector. Dr. Randeep Guleria, Director, AIIMS, New Delhi will be its Convenor.

International Agreements and Engagements

- **There have been a number of International Agreements** and Engagements that has helped India to increase and enhance its Global Presence.
- **Some of the International appointments and engagements are as under:** · India became the Vice Chair of the Asia Pacific Region of World Customs Organisation (WCO) for a period of two years, from July, 2018 to June, 2020.
- **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** concluded its 3rd Annual Meeting on an optimistic note to raise its lending capacity to boost prosperity and security in the region. AIIB decided to invest \$140M to improve Rural Connectivity in India.
- **Government of India** and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$80 million loan agreement to help boost youth employability in the state of Himachal Pradesh.
- **The Government of India** and World Bank signed \$100 million project to boost rural economy of Tamil Nadu.
- **The Government of India** and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$250 million loan to improve rural connectivity in the 5 states of Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal under PMGSY.
- **Government of India** and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$75 million loan to improve urban services in 4 Karnataka towns
- **Government of India** and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$200 million loan to improve State Highways in Bihar
- **Government of India** and the World Bank signed \$310 million loan agreement for Jharkhand Power System Improvement Project to provide reliable, quality, and affordable 24x7 electricity to the citizens of Jharkhand
- **Government of India** and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$105 million loan to Support Hydropower Transmission in Himachal Pradesh
- **Government of India** and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$300 million loan to support India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) in India
- **Government of India** and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$169 million loan to provide water and sanitation services in Tamil Nadu
- **India and Japan** signed a loan agreement worth Rs. 1817 crore for the 'Project for the Construction of Turga Pumped Storage (I)' contributing to the industrial development and living standard improvement in the state of West Bengal.
- **Indo- Japanese** agreements for bilateral currency swap arrangement of seventy five billion dollars
- **Cabinet approved Memorandum** of Understanding between India and Singapore on setting up of a Joint Working Group on FinTech
- **Cabinet approved** signing of bilateral investment agreement between India Taipei Association in Taipei and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India
- **India and ADB** signed \$110 Million Loan to improve rural connectivity in Madhya Pradesh
- **Government of India** and The Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$100 million loan agreement to expand sewerage and drainage coverage in Kolkata
- **Government of India** and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$ 150 million loan agreement to support India's first global skills park in state of Madhya Pradesh
- **India and ADB** signed \$240 million loan to provide safe drinking water service in 3 West Bengal districts
- **The Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and India signed \$150 million loan to improve regional connectivity
- **India and Japan signed loan agreement** for construction of Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed rail project (I) and Kolkata East West Metro Project (III) with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- **India signed financing loan agreement** with the World Bank for US\$ 74 million for Uttarakhand Workforce Development Project (UKWDP)
- **Cabinet approved MoU on collaborative research** on distributed ledger and block chain technology in the context of development of digital economy by Exim Bank under BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism
- **Government of India** and ADB signed \$346 million loan to improve state highways in Karnataka
- **Government of India** and ADB signed \$375 million loan to improve irrigation efficiency in Madhya Pradesh
- **Cabinet approved Memorandum of Understanding** between India and USA in insurance regulatory sector

- **Government of India** and the World Bank signed \$300 million agreement to help scale-up India's Energy Efficiency Program
- **The Government of India**, Government of Rajasthan and World Bank signed a \$250 million agreement to support electricity distribution sector reforms in Rajasthan
- **Indo-German Government** to Government Umbrella agreements worth Euro 653.7 million (approx. Rs. 5253 crore) on Financial Cooperation and Technical Cooperation 2017 were signed.
- **India signed loan agreement** with the World Bank for USD 21.7 million for strengthening the Public Financial Management in Rajasthan Project;
- **Cabinet approved MoU between India and Turkey** on trade in poppy seeds to ensure quick and transparent processing for import of poppy seeds from Turkey'
- **CBDT notified the protocol amending** the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Kuwait
- **India signed loan agreement with World Bank** for US\$ 125 million for "Innovate in India for Inclusiveness Project"
- **Government of India and World Bank** signed agreement to improve rural road network in Madhya Pradesh
- **India signed loan agreement with World Bank** for USD 48 million for Meghalaya community - led Landscapes Management Project
- **Government of India, Government of Maharashtra** and the World Bank signed a new project to benefit over 25 million small and marginal farmers in Maharashtra.
- **India and ADB** signed \$120 million loan to improve rail infrastructure
- **Cabinet approved agreement** for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion between India and Iran
- **Cabinet approved agreement** between India and Jordan on cooperation and mutual administrative assistance in customs matters
- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and the Government of India signed \$ 84 million loan for improvement and expansion of water supply in the state of Bihar
- **Government of India signed a MoU** with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in national capital
- **India and Iran signed in New Delhi** an agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA) and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to taxes on income.
- **Cabinet approved signing** and ratification of protocol amending the agreement between India and China for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion
- **Cabinet approved signing** of India-Australia Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for Secondment Programme.

GST Revenue Collections:

- **The GST Revenue collection** for the month of November 2018 has crossed Ninety-Seven Thousand Crore rupees. The total gross GST revenue collected in the month of November, 2018 is Rs. 97,637 crore of which CGST is Rs. 16,812 crore, SGST is Rs. 23,070 crore, IGST is Rs. 49,726 crore (including Rs. 24,133 crore collected on imports) and Cess is Rs. 8,031 crore (including Rs. 842 crore collected on imports).
- **GST Council in the 31st Meeting** held on 22nd December, 2018 at New Delhi took following major decisions relating to changes in GST rates, and clarification (on goods). The decisions of the GST Council have been presented for easy understanding. The same would be given effect to through Gazette notifications/ circulars which shall have force of law.
- **GST rate reduction on goods which were attracting GST rate of 28% : 28% to 18%** Pulleys, transmission shafts and cranks, gear boxes etc., falling under HS Code 8483 Monitors and TVs of upto screen size of 32 inches Re-treaded or used pneumatic tyres of rubber;
- **Power banks of lithium ion batteries.** Lithium ion batteries are already at 18%. This will bring parity in GST rate of power bank and lithium ion battery. Digital cameras and video camera recorders Video game consoles and other games and sports requisites falling under HS code 9504.

- **Vegetables**, (uncooked or cooked by steaming or boiling in water), frozen, branded and put in a unit container. Vegetable provisionally preserved (for example by sulphur dioxide gas, in brine, in sulphur water or in other preservative solutions), but unsuitable in that state for immediate consumption.
- **Miscellaneous** Exemption from GST on supply of gold by Nominated Agencies to exporters of article of gold Jewellery. Exemption from GST on proceeds received by Government from auction of gifts received by President, Prime Minister, Governor or Chief Minister of a State and public servants, the proceeds of which is used for public or charitable cause.
- **Exemption from IGST/Compensation cess** on vehicles imported for temporary purposes under the Customs Convention on the Temporary importation of Private Road Vehicles (carnet de passages-en-douane). Rate of 5%/18% to be applied based on transaction value of footwear. Uniform GST rate of 12% on Flexible Intermediate Bulk Container (FIBC) from existing 5%/12% (depending on the value)

GST on solar power generating plant and other renewable energy plants

- **GST rate of 5% rate** has been prescribed on renewable energy devices & parts for their manufacture (bio gas plant/solar power based devices, solar power generating system (SGPS) etc) [falling under chapter 84, 85 or 94 of the Tariff]. Other goods or services used in these plants attract applicable GST.
- **Certain disputes** have arisen regarding GST rates where specified goods attracting 5% GST are supplied along with services of construction etc and other goods for solar power plant.
- **To resolve the dispute** the Council has recommended that in all such cases, the 70% of the gross value shall be deemed as the value of supply of said goods attracting 5% rate and the remaining portion (30%) of the aggregate value of such EPC contract shall be deemed as the value of supply of taxable service attracting standard GST rate.
- **GST Rate Cuts on Services** GST Council in the 31st meeting held on 22nd December, 2018 at New Delhi took following decisions relating to changes in GST rates, ITC eligibility criteria, exemptions and clarifications on connected issues. The decisions of the GST Council have been presented in this note in simple language for easy understanding. The same would be given effect to through Gazette notifications/ circulars which shall have force of law.
- **Reduction in GST rates/exemptions on Services:** GST rate on cinema tickets above Rs. 100 shall be reduced from 28% to 18% and on cinema tickets up to Rs. 100 from 18% to 12%. GST rate on third party insurance premium of goods carrying vehicles shall be reduced from 18% to 12%. Services supplied by banks to Basic Saving Bank Deposit (BSBD) account holders under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) shall be exempted.
- **Services supplied** by rehabilitation professionals recognized under Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 at medical establishments, educational institutions, rehabilitation centers established by Central Government / State Government or Union Territories or entity registered under section 12AA of the Income-tax Act shall be exempted.
- **Services provided** by GTA to Government departments/local authorities which have taken registration only for the purpose of deducting tax under Section 51 shall be excluded from payment of tax under RCM and the same shall be exempted.
- **Exemption on services** provided by Central or State Government or Union Territory Government to their undertakings or PSUs by way of guaranteeing loans taken by them from financial institutions is being extended to guaranteeing of such loans taken from banks. Air travel of pilgrims by non-scheduled/charter operations, for religious pilgrimage facilitated by the Government of India under bilateral arrangements shall attract the same rate of GST as applicable to similar flights in Economy class (i.e. 5% with ITC of input services).
- **Rationalization** Parliament and State legislatures shall be extended the same tax treatment with regard to payment of tax under RCM (reverse charge mechanism) as available to Central and State Governments. Security services (supply of security personnel) provided to a registered person, except Government Departments which have taken registration for TDS and entities registered under composition scheme, shall be put under RCM. Services provided by unregistered Business Facilitator (BF) to a bank and agent of Business correspondent (BC) to a BC shall be put under RCM.
- **GST Council's 30th Meeting:** During the 30th Meeting of the GST Council, the proposal of the State of Kerala for imposition of Cess on SGST for rehabilitation and flood affected works was discussed in detail. The Council decided to constitute a 7-Member Group of Ministers (GoM) to examine this issue in depth. Accordingly, the Union Finance Minister, Shri Arun Jaitley, had approved the constitution of a Group of Ministers on 28th September, 2018 to examine the issue regarding 'Modalities for Revenue Mobilization in case of Natural Calamities and Disasters'

GST Council :28th Meeting:

- **The GST Council** in its 28th Meeting took the following decisions on GST Rate on Goods and Services. GST Rate on Goods: GST rates reduction on 28% items:
- **28% to 18%** : Paints and varnishes (including enamels and lacquers) · Glaziers' putty, grafting putty, resin cements · Refrigerators, freezers and other refrigerating or freezing equipment including water cooler, milk coolers, refrigerating equipment for leather industry, ice cream freezer etc. · Washing machines. · Lithium-ion batteries · Vacuum cleaners · Domestic electrical appliances such as food grinders and mixers & food or vegetable juice extractor, shaver, hair clippers etc · Storage water heaters and immersion heaters, hair dryers, hand dryers, electric smoothing irons etc · Televisions upto the size of 68 cm · Special purpose motor vehicles. e.g., crane lorries, fire fighting vehicle, concrete mixer lorries, spraying lorries · Works trucks [self-propelled, not fitted with lifting or handling equipment] of the type used in factories, warehouses, dock areas or airports for short transport of goods. · Trailers and semi-trailers. · Miscellaneous articles such as scent sprays and similar toilet sprays, powder-puffs and pads for the application of cosmetics or toilet preparation.
- **28% to 12%** · Fuel Cell Vehicle. Further, Compensation cess shall also be exempted on fuel cell vehicle. Refund of accumulated credit on account of inverted duty structure to fabric manufacturers: Fabrics attract GST at the rate of 5% subject to the condition that refund of accumulated ITC on account of inversion will not be allowed. However, considering the difficulty faced by the Fabric sector on account of this condition, the GST Council has recommended for allowing refund to fabrics on account of inverted duty structure. The refund of accumulated ITC shall be allowed only with the prospective effect on the purchases made after the notification is issued.
- **GST rates were recommended to be brought down from,** 18% 12% 5% to Nil: o Stone/Marble/Wood Deities o Rakhi [other than that of precious or semi-precious material of chapter 71] o Sanitary Napkins, o Coir pith compost o Sal Leaves siali leaves and their products and Sabai Rope o PhoolBhariJhadoo [Raw material for Jhadoo] o Khali dona. o Circulation and commemorative coins, sold by Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Ltd [SPMCIL] to Ministry of Finance.
- **12% to 5%** o Chenille fabrics and other fabrics under heading 5801 o Handloom dari o Phosphoric acid (fertilizer grade only). o Knitted cap/topi having retail sale value not exceeding Rs. 1,000
- **18% to 12%** o Bamboo flooring. o Brass Kerosene Pressure Stove. o Hand Operated Rubber Roller. o Zip and Slide Fasteners.
- **18% to 5%** o Ethanol for sale to Oil Marketing Companies for blending with fuel o Solid bio fuel pellets
- **Rate change made in respect of footwear** o 5% GST is being extended to footwear having a retail sale price up to Rs. 1000 per pair o Footwear having a retail sale price exceeding Rs. 1000 per pair will continue to attract 18% V.GST rates were recommended to be brought down for specified handicraft items [as per the definition of handicraft, as approved by the GST council]
- **18% to 12%** o Handbags including pouches and purses; jewellery box o Wooden frames for painting, photographs, mirrors etc o Art ware of cork [including articles of sholapith] o Stone art ware, stone inlay work o Ornamental framed mirrors o Glass statues [other than those of crystal] o Glass art ware [including pots, jars, votive, cask, cake cover, tulip bottle, vase] o Art ware of iron o Art ware of brass, copper/ copper alloys, electro plated with nickel/silver o Aluminium art ware o Handcrafted lamps (including panchloga lamp) o Worked vegetable or mineral carving, articles thereof, articles of wax, of stearin, of natural gums or natural resins or of modelling pastes etc, (including articles of lac, shellac) o Ganjifa card
- **12% to 5%** o Handmade carpets and other handmade textile floor coverings (including namda/gabba) o Handmade lace o Hand-woven tapestries o Hand-made braids and ornamental trimming in the piece o Toran
- **Miscellaneous Change relating to valuation of a supply** o IGST @5% on Pool Issue Price (PIP) of Urea imported on Government account for direct agriculture use, instead of assessable value plus custom duty. o Exemption from Compensation cess to Coal rejects from washery [arising out of cess paid coal on which ITC has not been taken].
- **GST Rate on Services** The GST Council in its 28th meeting took following decisions relating to exemptions / changes in GST rates / ITC eligibility criteria, rationalization of rates / exemptions and clarification on levy of GST on services.
- **It would be noted that multiple reliefs from GST taxation have been provided to following categories of services** – (i) Agriculture, farming and food processing industry, (ii) Education, training and skill development, (iii) Pension, social security and old age support.
- **Hotel industry** has been given major relief by providing that the rate of tax on accommodation service shall be based on transaction value instead of declared tariff. Services provided in sectors like banking, IT have been provided relief by exempting services supplied by an establishment of a person in India to any establishment of that person outside India [related party]. As a green initiative, GST on supply of e-books has been reduced from 18 to 5%.

EXEMPTIONS / CHANGES IN GST RATES AND SERVICES

- **Sector –Farmers/ Agriculture/ Food Processing** Exempted services by way of artificial insemination of livestock (other than horses).
- **Exempted** warehousing of minor forest produce in line with exemptions provided to the agricultural produce.

- **Exempted** the works of installation and commissioning undertaken by DISCOMS/ electricity distribution companies for extending electricity distribution network upto the tube well of the farmer/ agriculturalist for agricultural use.
- **Exempted** services provided by FSSAI to food business operators.
- **Education/ Training/ Skill Development** Reduced rate of GST from 18% to 5% on supply only of e-books for which print version exist.
- **Exempted** services provided by Coal Mines Provident Fund Organisation to the PF subscribers from the applicability of GST on the lines of EPFO.
- **Exempted** supply of services by an old age home run by State / Central Government or by a body registered under 12AA of Income Tax Act) to its residents (aged 60 years or more) against consideration upto Rupees Twenty Five Thousand per month per member provided consideration is inclusive of charges for boarding, lodging and maintenance.
- **Exempted** GST on the administrative fee collected by National Pension System Trust.
- **Exempted** services provided by an unincorporated body or a non-profit entity registered under any law for the time being in force, engaged in activities relating to the welfare of industrial or agricultural labour or farmer; or for the promotion of trade, commerce, industry, agriculture, art, science, literature, culture, sports, education, social welfare, charitable activities and protection of environment, to own members against consideration in the form of membership fee up to an amount of one thousand rupees per member per year.
- **Banking/ Finance/ Insurance** Exempted Reinsurance Services provided to specified Insurance Schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Mission (PMRSSM) (Ayushman Bharat), funded by Government.
- **Exempted services** provided by Government to ERCC by way of assigning the right to collect royalty, DMFT etc. from the mining lease holders.
- **Exempted** the guarantees given by Central/State Government/UT administration to their undertakings/PSUs.
- **Exempted GST** on import of services by Foreign Diplomatic Missions/ UN & other International Organizations based on reciprocity.
- **Exempted services** supplied by an establishment of a person in India to any establishment of that person outside India, which are treated as establishments of distinct persons in accordance with Explanation I in section 8 of the IGST Act provided the place of supply is outside the taxable territory of India in accordance with section 13 of IGST Act
- **Prescribed GST** rate slabs on accommodation service based on transaction value instead of declared tariff which is likely to provide major relief to the hotel industry.
- **Prescribed GST rate** of 12% with full ITC under forward charge for composite supply of multimodal transportation.
- **Rationalized the notification entry** prescribing reduced GST rate on composite supply of works contract received by the Government or a local authority in the course of their sovereign functions.
- **Rationalized entry** relating to composite supply of food and drinks in restaurant, mess, canteen, eating joints and such supplies to institutions (educational, office, factory, hospital) on contractual basis at GST rate of 5%; and making it clear that the scope of outdoor catering under 7(v) is restricted to supplies in case of outdoor/indoor functions that are event based and occasional in nature.
- **Also, the GST Council** in its 28th Meeting had approved the New Return Formats and associated changes in law. It may be recalled that in the 27th Meeting held on 4th of May, 2018, the Council had approved the basic principles of GST return design and directed the law committee to finalize the return formats and changes in law. The formats and business process approved in 28th meeting were in line with the basic principles with one major change i.e., the option of filing quarterly return with monthly payment of tax in a simplified return format by the small tax payers.

GST Refunds

- **Total GST refunds** to the tune of Rs 91,149 crores have been disposed by CBIC and State authorities out of the total refund claims of Rs 97,202 crores received so far. Thus, the disposal rate of 93.77 per cent has been achieved. The pending GST refund claims amounting to Rs 6,053 crores are being expeditiously processed so as to provide relief to eligible claimants. Refund claims without any deficiency are being cleared expeditiously.
- **GST Evasion - E-way Bill System** The E-way Bill System had been introduced nation-wide for inter-State movement of goods with effect from 1st April, 2018 while the States were given the option to choose any date till 3rd June, 2018 for the introduction of the E-way bill system for intra-State supplies. The objectives of E-way bill system are as below:

- **single and unified E-way** bill for inter-State and intra-State movement of goods for the whole country in self-service mode, enabling paperless and fully online system to facilitate seamless movement of goods across all the States, improve service delivery with quick turnaround time for the entire supply chain and provide anytime anywhere access to data/services, to facilitate hassle free movement of goods by abolishing inter-State check posts across the country
- **Demonetization and Unearthing Black Money** The larger purpose of demonetisation was to move India from a Tax Non-compliant society to a compliant society. This necessarily involved the formalization of the Economy and a blow to the black money.
- **Demonetization** compelled holders of cash to deposit the same in the banks. The enormity of cash deposited and identified with the owner resulted in suspected 17.42 lakh account holders from whom the response has been received online through non-invasive method. Larger deposits in banks improved lending capacity for the banks. A lot of this money was diverted to the Mutual Funds for further investments. It became a part of the formal system.
- **The impact of demonetization** has been felt on collection of personal income tax. Its collections were higher in Financial Year 2018-19 (till 31-10-2018) compared to the previous year by 20.2%. Even in the corporate tax the collections are 19.5% higher. From two years prior to demonetization, direct tax collections have increased 6.6% and 9% respectively. In the next two years, post demonetization the increase by 14.6% (part of the year before impact of demonetization in 2016-17) and an increase of 18% in the year 2017-18.
- **Appropriate** action by the Income-tax Department (ITD) and other Law Enforcement Agencies has been taken against those involved in the misuse of the Scheme of Demonetization.
- **During the period** November 2016 to March, 2017, ITD conducted searches in 900 groups, involved in various activities and business, leading to seizure of Rs. 900 crores, including cash seizure of Rs. 636 crores. During the same period, 8239 surveys were conducted leading to detection of undisclosed income of Rs. 6745 crores.
- **With the objective** of obtaining people's participation in the Income Tax Department's efforts to unearth black money and reduce tax evasion, a new reward scheme titled "Income Tax Informants Reward Scheme, 2018" has been issued by the Income Tax Department, superseding the earlier reward scheme issued in 2007.

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)

- **The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** has entered into nine more Unilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (UAPAs) during the month of July, 2018. With the signing of these Agreements, the total number of APAs entered into by the CBDT has gone up to 232, which includes 20 Bilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (BAPAs).
- **Direct Tax** There has been continuous increase in the amount of income declared in the returns filed by all categories of taxpayers over the last three Assessment Years (AYs). For AY 2014-15, corresponding to FY 2013-14 (base year), the return filers had declared gross total income of Rs.26.92 lakh crore, which has increased by 67% to Rs.44.88 lakh crore for AY 2017-18, showing higher level of compliance resulting from various legislative and administrative measures taken by the Government, including effective enforcement measures against tax evasion.
- **Refunds amounting** to Rs.1.23 lakh crore have been issued during April, 2018 to November, 2018, which is 20.8% higher than refunds issued during the same period in the preceding year. So far as the Growth Rate for Corporate Income Tax (CIT) and Personal Income Tax (PIT) is concerned, the Growth Rate of Gross Collections for CIT is 17.7% while that for PIT (including STT) is 18.3%.
- **According to the Direct Tax Statistics released by CBDT:** There is a constant growth in direct tax-GDP ratio over last three years and the ratio of 5.98% in FY 2017-18 is the best DT-GDP ratio in last 10 years.
- **There is a growth** of more than 80% in the number of returns filed in the last four financial years from 3.79 crore in FY 2013-14 (base year) to 6.85 crore in FY 2017-18.
- **The number of persons** filing Return of Income has also increased by about 65% during this period from 3.31 crore in FY 2013-14 to 5.44 crore in FY 2017-18.

Department of Financial Services - Reforms for addressing the Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of Public Sector Banks (PSBs)

- **The government** has strongly come out with key measures and reforms in order to address the increase in NPAs, which are detailed as under.

- **Recapitalization of Public Sector Banks (PSBs):** Government moved proposal in Parliament for enhanced bank re-capitalisation outlay from Rs.65,000 crore to Rs.1,06,000 crore in the current financial year to propel economic growth, cementing India's position as the fastest growing economy of the world. This would enable infusion of over Rs.83,000 in Public Sector Banks (PSBs).
- **The enhanced provision is aimed at:** Meeting regulatory capital norms
- **Providing** capital to better-performing PCA Banks to achieve 9% Capital to Risk-weighted Asset Ratio (CRAR); 1.875% Capital Conservation Buffer and the 6% Net NPA threshold, facilitating them to come out of PCA
- **Facilitating** non-PCA banks that are in breach of some PCA thresholds to not be in breach
- **Strengthen** amalgamating banks by providing regulatory and growth capital Following comprehensive clean-up of the banking system under Government's 4R's approach of Recognition, Resolution, Recapitalisation and Reforms, the envisaged recapitalisation would equip banks financially at levels higher than the global norms. In this connection, it is pertinent that India's capital norms for banks are 1% higher than the norms recommended under the global Basel-III framework. Further, unlike the early intervention regime of other major economies, India's PCA framework for weaker banks has more onerous thresholds, viz., higher capital thresholds and a Net NPA threshold that further embeds capital requirement on account of provisioning of NPAs. Today's proposal in an expression of Government's commitment that each PSB is an article of faith, and aims at securing compliance even for the higher regulatory norms.
- **One market place for Public Sector Bank loans** The reforms agenda aimed at Enhanced Access & Service Excellence (EASE), encapsulates a synergistic approach to ensuring prudential and clean lending, better customer service, enhanced credit availability, focus on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and better governance.
- **Consolidation of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)** With a view to enable Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) to minimize their overhead expenses, optimize the use of technology, enhance the capital base and area of operation and increase their exposure, the Government has sought comments of respective State Governments and Sponsor Banks on a roadmap for Amalgamation of RRBs within a State.
- **Apart from these measures**, a number of other measures have been undertaken. As a result, PSBs recovered an amount of Rs. 1,58,259 crore, during the financial years 2015-16 to 2017-18.
- **To avoid recurrence** and for stringent recovery, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) has been enacted to create a Unified Framework for resolving insolvency and bankruptcy matters.
- **The Banking Regulation Act, 1949** was amended, to provide for authorization to RBI to issue directions to banks to initiate the insolvency resolution process under IBC. Under this, by adopting a creditor-in-saddle approach, with the interim resolution professional taking over management of affairs of Corporate Debtor at the outset, the incentive to resort to abuse of the legal system was taken away. This coupled with debarment of wilful defaulters and persons associated with NPA accounts from the resolution process, has effected a fundamental change in the creditor-debtor relationship.
- **Further, as per RBI's directions**, cases have been filed under IBC in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) in respect of 39 large defaulters, amounting to about Rs. 2.69 lakh crore funded exposure (as of December 2017).
- **In addition, recapitalisation of PSBs**, announced and initiated by the Government, has enabled upfront provisioning, easing apprehensions in actively pursuing resolution.
- **Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act)** has been amended for faster recovery with a provision for three months imprisonment in case the borrower does not provide asset details and for the lender to get possession of mortgaged property within 30 days. Also, six new Debts Recovery Tribunal have been established to expedite recovery.
- **PSB Reforms Agenda announced by the Government**, PSBs have committed to strengthen recovery mechanism by setting-up Stressed Asset Management Verticals for focussed recovery, clean and effective post-sanction follow-up on large-value accounts by tying up with Agencies for Specialized Monitoring for loans of Rs. 250 crore and above, and strict segregation of pre- and post-sanction roles for enhanced accountability.
- **To reduce incidence of default on account** of and to effect recovery from wilful defaulters, as per RBI's instructions, wilful defaulters are not sanctioned any additional facilities by banks or financial institutions, their unit is debarred from floating new ventures for five years, and lenders may initiate criminal proceedings against them, wherever necessary.
- **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Regulations** have been amended to debar wilful defaulters and companies with wilful defaulters as promoters/directors from accessing capital markets to raise funds. Further, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has been amended to debar wilful defaulters from participating in the insolvency resolution process.
- **Global Recognition of Government's Reform Drive** The reform drive undertaken by the government has been recognized by International Organizations like Standard & Poor's which states, inter-alia, that "the worst is almost over for India's banks". It states that the Government is working on a four-pronged strategy to improve the health of the banking sector: recognition, resolution, recapitalisation and reform ("4Rs"), and that their stable outlook on the banks reflect their view that the "4Rs" and other initiatives taken by the Government and RBI will strengthen the banking system over the next couple of years.
- **Streamlining of National Pension System (NPS)** The Union Cabinet in its Meeting on 6th December, 2018 has approved the following

- **Financial Inclusion** Finance Ministry launches Mobile Application "Jan DhanDarshak" as a part of Financial Inclusion Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance and National Informatics Centre (NIC) has jointly developed a mobile app called Jan DhanDarshak as a part of financial inclusion (FI) initiative . As the name suggests, this app will act as a guide for the common people in locating a financial service touch point at a given location in the country.
- **Major Schemes and their Improvements:** Issue of Kisan Credit Cards There is positive growth in terms of both individual policies as well as first year premium during 2017-18. Apart from interest rates, there are other factors which affect the life insurance growth such as overall economic growth, sales force, product portfolio, level of competition with other financial products etc.

Pradhan Mantri Jan DhanYojana (PMJDY)

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan DhanYojana (PMJDY):** Under Pradhan Mantri Jan DhanYojana 33.4 Crore beneficiaries banked so far ₹85,494.69 Crore balance in beneficiary accounts as on 17th December, 2018
- **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana** extended up to March 2020: Exemption of Interest Income on deposits increased to Rs 50,000. Existed limit on investment under PMVVY enhanced to Rs 15 lakhs.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme:** Until 30 June, 2018 more than 1.39 crore accounts have been opened across the country in the name of girl-child securing an amount of Rs.25,979.62 crore.
- **Atal Pension Scheme:** The Subscriber base under APY has crossed 1.24 crore mark; More than 27 lacs new subscribers have joined the Scheme during the Current Financial Year 2018-19 (As on 2nd November, 2018). The Scheme is very easy to understand and it is very transparent. States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka are the top contributors in APY enrollment. The Scheme allows any Indian Citizen between the age group of 18-40 years to join through the bank or post office branches where one has the savings bank account.

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)

- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana:** As per data uploaded by banks, the number of persons enrolled under Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) as on 31.10.2018 is 14.27 Crores.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana:** 5.47 crore subscribers under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) with 1.10 lakh claims, involving an amount of Rs. 2,206.28 crore settled so far. (As on 8th September, 2018)
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana** Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) is a scheme launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on April 8, 2015 for providing loans upto 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises. These loans are classified as MUDRA loans under PMMY. During the financial year 2018-19, the number of loan sanctioned are 2,92,30,665 with total amount sanctioned Rs. 1,53,783.83 Crores, with total amount disbursed Rs. 1,47,115.20 Crores (As 14th December, 2018)

Rates of Small Saving Schemes was increased for Financial Year 2018-19.

- **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** Achieves a Historical Record Breaking Volume of Digital Transaction
- **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** is an ambitious project of Government of India being implemented by Controller General of Accounts, Ministry of Finance. PFMS has proved as a robust digital platform towards Prime Minister's vision of DIGITAL INDIA.
- **On 28th March, 2018**, an historic amount of Rs. 71,633.45 crore has been digitally transacted/routed through PFMS Portal for 98, 19,026 transactions in a single day.

- **Department of Disinvestment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)** - As on 11th December, 2018, the Government had realized Rs. 34,005.05 crore as disinvestment proceeds against the BE of Rs. 80,000 crore during the current financial year (2018-19).
- **The FFO 3** of CPSE-ETF in November 2018 was the biggest disinvestment transaction through ETF raising Rs. 17,000 crore.
- **Total disinvestment proceeds** during 2017-18 was Rs. 1,00,056.91 crore vis-a-vis the revised target of Rs. 1,00,000 crore.
- **CPSEs constitute** 8.81% and 8.89% of the total market capitalisation of companies listed at BSE and NSE respectively (as on 7th December, 2018)
- **The Initial Public Offering (IPO)** of CPSE IRCON had been subscribed 9.5 times. The Government expected to raise Rs 466 crore from the issue. IRCON is the second CPSE to launch an IPO in the Current Fiscal besides being the second Railway CPSE to be listed on the stock markets after RITES in June this year.
- **Further Fund Offer of Bharat** – 22 ETF had been a resounding success with strong participation of FII's.
- **Also, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi had given 'in principle' approval for strategic disinvestment of 100% Government of India's shares in DCIL to consortium of four ports namely, Vishakhapatnam Port Trust, Paradeep Port Trust, JawaharLal Nehru Port Trust and Kandla Port Trust.
- **In January, The Government of India** had also entered into an agreement with ONGC for the strategic sale of its 51.11% equity share-holding in HPCL at a consideration of Rs. 36,915 crore.

Department of Expenditure

- **The Finance Minister** said that in order to impart unquestionable credibility to the Government's commitment for the revised fiscal glide path, he proposed to accept key recommendations of the Fiscal Reform and Budget Management (FRBM) Committee relating to adoption of the Debt Rule and to bring down the Central Government's Debt to GDP ratio to 40%. The Government also accepted the recommendation to use Fiscal Deficit target as the key operational parameter.
- **Presenting** the General Budget 2018-19 in Parliament here, the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley said that the total earmarked allocation for SCs in 279 programmes had been increased from Rs.34,334 crore in 2016-17 to Rs.52,719 crore in RE 2017-18. Likewise, for STs, earmarked allocation had been increased from Rs.21,811 crore in 2016-17 to Rs.32,508 crore in RE 2017-18 in 305 programmes. The Finance Minister said that earmarked allocation had been further increased to Rs.56,619 crore for SCs and Rs.39,135 crore for STs in BE 2018-19.
- **The Union Cabinet**, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved to release an additional installment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to Central Government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners w.e.f. 01.07.2018 representing an increase of 2% over the existing rate of 7% of the Basic Pay/Pension, to compensate for price rise.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** had been made applicable across the country vide M/o Finance OM dated 12.12.2014. Till 15/02/2018, 366 such schemes/components were identified where cash was directly transferred to bank account of the beneficiaries. Till 15/02/2018, Rs. 2,64,113 crore was transferred to the beneficiaries in the Cash Schemes.
- **Total Agriculture Credit Disbursement** increased from Rs. 9,15,509.92 Crore in 2015-16 to Rs. 11,68,502.84 Crore in 2017-18
- **To enhance their skills** and keep pace with the changes in the World Global Environment, the Department of Expenditure took the lead role in the capacity building of Financial Advisers

Government has launched several initiatives recently to promote research in Higher Educational Institutions

- **Ministry of Human Resource Development** and its organizations like University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) are undertaking various research projects in the different Higher Educational Institutions. Department of Science & Technology and Department of Biotechnology also provide funding support to higher educational institutions for various research projects. These research projects are both domestic and also with international collaboration.

- **As informed by the UGC**, it has released a sum of Rs. 82.35 crores to 819 projects under the Major Research Project Scheme from 2016-17 to 2018-19 (till December 2018) . The state-wise distribution is as detailed below: UGC has further informed that no proposals for research projects have been received from Nagaland, Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.
- **Apart from the above Major Research Project scheme**, UGC has funded several schemes for research and innovation like Special Assistance Programme (SAP), Colleges with Potential for Excellence (CPE), University with Potential for Excellence (UPE), Centre with Potential for Excellence in Particular Areas (CPEPA), Fellowships support for Research to students and teachers. In 2017 -18, an amount of Rs. 1769 crores has been spent under these schemes.
- **UGC is actively involved in promoting** research through international collaborations through important initiatives like UK India Education Research Initiative (UKIERI), Israel Science Foundation (ISF), Indo Norway Cooperation Programme (NCP), Indo German Programme (IGP), 21st Century Knowledge Initiative with United States of America. They aim at joint research projects with collaboration between Indian institutions and foreign institutions. In the last one year, around Rs. 46 crores is spent on 83 joint research projects. Various other initiatives to improve the research ecosystem in Indian Higher Educational Institutions have been taken up.
- **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)** is a recent initiative of the Ministry to support Joint Research Projects through collaboration of top ranked Indian Institutions and globally ranked Foreign Institutions. It aims to support 600 research projects in two years, at an outlay of Rs. 418 crores. To channelize technical research, the Impacting Research Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT) scheme has been launched. Under IMPRINT-I, 142 research projects with an outlay of Rs. 318.71 crores for 3 years have been accepted.
- **Under IMPRINT-II**, a total of 122 projects at an estimated cost of Rs. 112 crores have been approved. For the promotion of Research in Social Sciences, the scheme for Impactful Policy Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS) has been launched. Under this scheme 1500 research projects, at a total sanctioned cost of Rs. 414 crores, will be awarded for implementation upto 31.3.2021.

Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- **The Bill amends** the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.
- **Key features of the Bill:** Offline verification of Aadhaar number holder: The Bill allows 'offline verification' of an individual's identity, without authentication, through modes specified by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) by regulations. During offline verification, the agency must (i) obtain the consent of the individual, (ii) inform them of alternatives to sharing information, and (iii) not collect, use or store Aadhaar number or biometric information.
- **Voluntary use of Aadhaar to verify identity:** The Bill states that an individual may voluntarily use his Aadhaar number to establish his identity, by authentication or offline verification. Authentication of an individual's identity via Aadhaar, for the provision of any service, may be made mandatory only by a law of Parliament.
- **Entities using Aadhaar:** An entity may be allowed to perform authentication through Aadhaar, if the UIDAI is satisfied that it is (i) compliant with certain standards of privacy and security, or (ii) permitted by law, or (iii) seeking authentication for a purpose specified by the central government in the interest of the State.
- **Aadhaar number of children:** The Bill specifies that at the time of enrolling a child to obtain an Aadhaar number, the enrolling agency shall seek the consent of his parent or guardian. The agency must inform the parent or guardian of (i) the manner in which the information will be used, (ii) the recipients with whom it will be shared, and (iii) their right to access the information. After attaining eighteen years of age, the child may apply for cancellation of his Aadhaar.
- **Disclosure of information in certain cases:** Under the Act, restrictions on security and confidentiality of Aadhaar related information do not apply in case the disclosure is pursuant to an order of a District Court (or above). The Bill amends this to allow such disclosure only for orders by High Courts (or above). The Bill also allows disclosure of information on directions of officers not below the rank of a Secretary.
- **UIDAI Fund: Under the Act**, all fees and revenue collected by the UIDAI shall be credited to the Consolidated Fund of India. The Bill removes this provision, and creates the Unique Identification Authority of India Fund. All fees, grants and charges received by the UIDAI shall be credited to this fund. The fund shall be used for expenses of the UIDAI, including salaries and allowances of its employees.
- **Complaints: The Bill allows** the individual to register complaints in certain cases, including impersonation or disclosure of their identity. The Bill defines the Aadhaar ecosystem to include enrolling agencies, requesting agencies, and offline verification-seeking entities. It allows the UIDAI to issue directions to them if necessary for the discharge of its functions under the Act.
- **Penalties: Under the Bill**, the UIDAI may initiate a complaint against an entity in the Aadhaar ecosystem for failure to (i) comply with the Act or the UIDAI's directions, and (ii) furnish information required by the UIDAI. Adjudicating Officers appointed by the UIDAI shall decide such matters, and may impose penalties up to one crore rupees on such entities. The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal shall be the appellate authority against decisions of the Adjudicating Officer.

- **Why the amendments are proposed?** While upholding the constitutional validity of Aadhaar, the Supreme Court had struck down Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016 that permitted private entities like telecom companies or other corporate to avail of the biometric Aadhaar data. Hence to address the issues like recognising the authentication of those who provided Aadhaar as the identity proof, the amendments are brought in by the government.

Assam Accord

- **What does Clause 6 state?** Clause 6 of the Assam Accord "envisaged that appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people."
- **The Committee will:** Hold discussions with all stakeholders and assess the required quantum of reservation of seats in the Assam Assembly and local bodies for Assamese people. Look at measures to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam, reservation in state government jobs, and other steps to protect, preserve and promote cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.
- **Suggest constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards and examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement the clause.** Look into issues of the Bodo people, especially the measures mentioned in the Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Government of India, Assam government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force in 2003.
- **Significance:** The setting up of the committee will pave the way for the implementation of the Assam Accord in letter and spirit and will help fulfill longstanding expectations of Assamese people. The Union Cabinet's announcement comes at a time when Centre is facing criticism in Assam over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, which proposes to make minority (non-Muslim) immigrants from three neighbouring countries — Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan — eligible for Indian citizenship. But as per the Assam Accord, any person who came to the state after the midnight of March 24, 1971, will be identified as a foreigner. So the proposed Bill is seen to violate the Assam Accord by differentiating between migrants on the basis of religion.
- **What is Assam Accord?** The Assam Accord (1985) was a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement in New Delhi on 15 August 1985. The accord brought an end to the Assam Agitation and paved the way for the leaders of the agitation to form a political party and form a government in the state of Assam soon after.
- **As per the Accord,** those Bangladeshis who came between 1966 and 1971 will be barred from voting for ten years. The Accord also mentions that the international borders will be sealed and all persons who crossed over from Bangladesh after 1971 are to be deported. Though the accord brought an end to the agitation, some of the key clauses are yet to be implemented, which has kept some of the issues festering.

Parivesh (Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Single-window Hub)

- **What is it?** It is an environmental single window hub for Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ clearances. This Single-Window Integrated Environmental Management System has been developed in pursuance of the spirit of 'Digital India' initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance.
- **Key features:** "PARIVESH" is a workflow based application, based on the concept of web architecture. It has been rolled out for online submission, monitoring and management of proposals submitted by Project Proponents to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC), as well as to the State Level Environmental Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAA). It seeks to give various types of clearances (e.g. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and Coastal Regulation Zone Clearances) from Central, State and district-level authorities.
- **The system** has been designed, developed and hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, with technical support from National Informatics Centre, (NIC). It provides single registration and single sign-in for all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ), unique-ID for all types of clearances required for a particular project and a single Window interface for the proponent to submit applications for getting all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forests, Wildlife and CRZ clearances).
- **Significance and benefits of the platform:** PARIVESH offers a framework to generate economic growth and strengthens Sustainable Development through e- Governance. With automatic highlighting of non-compliance by the system, PARIVESH helps in improving the overall performance and efficiency of the whole appraisal process. It also helps the processing authorities, as it has a Single Window System for Central, State and District level clearances.
- **The facility** of Geographic Information System (GIS) interface for the Appraisal Committee will help them in analyzing the proposal efficiently, automatic alerts (via SMS and emails) at important stages to the concerned officers, committee members and higher authorities to check the delays, if any. It also enables project proponents, citizens to view, track and interact with scrutiny officers, generates online clearance letters, online mailers and alerts to state functionaries in case of delays beyond stipulated time for processing of applications.

Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities

- **Background:** The exchange is done each year on January 1, under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities, also referred to as the Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement.
- **About the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations:** The agreement, which was signed on December 31, 1988, and entered into force on January 27, 1991, provides that the two countries inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the pact on the first of January of every calendar year.
- **Significance of the agreement:** The need for the agreement had been felt against the backdrop of Israel's 1981 bombing of Iraq's Osirak reactor near Baghdad. The strike, carried out by Israeli fighter jets over hostile airspace, had set Iraq's nuclear weapons programme significantly. The agreement had also come at a time of deep anxiety for Pakistan. Islamabad had been rattled by the memory of the 1972 defeat which dismembered the country, and military developments in India, such as Operation Brasstacks in 1987, which was a wargame exercise to prepare for deep strike offensive capabilities. Pakistan had at the time responded by putting at its nuclear installations and assets on 'high alert'.

Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018

- **The ARIA Act**, specifically, calls for America's increased engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and strengthened support, including arms sales, for U.S. allies in the region. The act develops a long-term strategic vision and a comprehensive, multifaceted, and principled United States policy for the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Security Interests:** Authorizes US\$ 1.5 billion annually for 5 years to enhance U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific. Reaffirms U.S. security commitments to our allies in the Indo-Pacific, including Japan, South Korea, and Australia and builds security partnerships with nations in Southeast Asia. Establishes a policy goal to peacefully denuclearize North Korea through the campaign of maximum pressure and engagement.
- **Enhances the U.S. diplomatic, economic, and security relationship with India.** Enforces U.S. freedom of navigation and overflight rights in the Indo-Pacific. Expresses support for regular arms sales to Taiwan and to enhance the economic, political, and security relationship between Taiwan and the United States. Promotes robust cybersecurity cooperation with our allies in the region. Sets U.S. policy to pursue effective arms control and nuclear nonproliferation policies in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Economic Engagement:** Promotes economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region as essential for the growth of the U.S. economy and success of American businesses. Authorizes bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations with Indo-Pacific nations. Provides for robust U.S. commercial presence throughout the Indo-Pacific region to promote U.S. exports and additional trade facilitation efforts. Authorizes the imposition of penalties on entities and governments engaged in the theft of United States intellectual property. Requires a new comprehensive U.S. policy to promote energy exports.
- **Promoting Values:** Provides US\$ 150 million annually for 5 years for democracy, rule of law, and civil society support, including \$10 million annually for freedom of information efforts in North Korea. Call for additional U.S. efforts against trafficking-in-persons and human slavery; and Authorizes U.S. sanctions against human rights abusers.

A paper sensor that can detect freshness of milk

- **Background:** Milk being widely consumed food, its safety is of prime concern to consumers. More so because it is highly perishable and prone to action of enzymes and microorganisms inherently present in it. Although pasteurization, freezing and preservation using additives are widely used to prevent spoilage, perishability of milk is still a concern.
- **The new method- how it works?** A milk enzyme, Alkaline Phosphatase or ALP, is considered an indicator of milk quality because its presence even after pasteurization indicates presence of microbes that may not have been rendered inactive with pasteurization. Researchers used ordinary filter paper to prepare the detector. The filter paper was cut into small discs and impregnated with chemical probes that preferentially react with ALP. The 'probes' used are antibodies that specifically bind to ALP. When ALP comes into contact with the probe, it turns white paper disc into a coloured one.

- **The colour change** on paper discs is then photographed by a smartphone camera and images processed to obtain corresponding colour values. These values are then compared with standard data stored in the phone. Thus not only the presence of ALP could be detected but the amount of it in milk could also be measured.

Organizations Banned Under UAPA

- **In exercise of the powers** vested in the Central Government under Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA), the Government on being satisfied that the organizations have become Unlawful, has declared the following Organizations as Unlawful Associates during the last three years:
- **Islamic Research Foundation (IRF)** National Liberation Front in Tripura (NLFT) All Tripura Tiger Forum (ATTF) Under Section 35 of UAPA, the Government on being satisfied that the organization is involved in terrorism had added the following organizations to the First Schedule of UAPA during the last three years:
- **Al-Qaida in Indian Sub-continent (AQIS)** and all its manifestations. Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP)/ISIS Wilayat Khorasan/Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham-Khorasan (ISIS-K) and all its manifestations. Khalistan Liberation Force and all its manifestations.
- **Current Scenario:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested 418 accused persons under UAPA during the last three years. But, the State Police also detain accused persons under UAPA, the details of which are not maintained by the Central Government. The Government has not removed any organization from the list of banned organizations under the UAPA during the last three years. The Government has not released any person detained under UAPA. However, the data of persons detained under UAPA and released on the order of the competent courts is not maintained by the Government.
- **Background:** National Investigation Agency: (HQ – New Delhi) The National Investigation Agency was established after the enactment of the NIA Act on 31st Dec 2008. Presently, NIA is functioning as the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency in India. NIA comes under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Vision of NIA –** The National Investigation Agency aims to be a thoroughly professional investigative agency matching the best international standards. The NIA aims to set the standards of excellence in counter terrorism and other national security related investigations at the national level by developing into a highly trained, partnership oriented workforce. NIA aims at creating deterrence for existing and potential terrorist groups/individuals. It aims to develop as a storehouse of all terrorist related information.

Cabinet approves 'The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018' for revision in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh

- **The Union Cabinet** (chaired by Prime Minister) has approved the introduction of The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018 in the Parliament for certain amendments in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 so as to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Changes made in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are:** Deletion of 'Abor' in serial No. 1, as it is the same as 'Adi' in Serial No. 16. Replace 'Tai Khamti' instead of 'Khampti' at serial No. 6. Inclusion of 'Mishmi-Kaman' (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Taraon (Digaru Mishmi) in serial No. 8.
- **Inclusion of Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolong (Miji) in serial No. 9 in lieu of 'Momba'.** Inclusion of 'Nocte', 'Tangsa', 'Tutsa', 'Wancho' in lieu of 'Any Naga Tribes' in serial No. 10 in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. After the Bill becomes an Act, member of the communities newly listed will also be able to derive benefits meant for STs under the existing schemes of the Government.



Swachh Survekshan -2019, Paperless and Digital, will Commence from 4th Jan, 2019 Covering all cities : Hardeep S Puri

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)-4124 Cities & Urban Areas of 21 States / UTS Declared ODF** SWM- Processing Increased to 46% Consultative Committee Meeting of the MoHUA Held
- **The Housing & Urban Affairs Minister** informed the Members on the progress made under the Swachh Bharat Mission and stated that the physical targets with regard to building of individual and Community/Public toilets are well on the way to being achieved. "There is, however, a much larger challenge that will require participation of all sections of society. That is the behavioural change among the citizens. The SBM architecture has Behaviour change strategy and Information Education Communication (IEC) as critical components. Under the Mission, all public toilets and urinals constructed have a minimum 5 year maintenance contract. Yet, that is not enough if the users do not change their mindset. All stakeholders must, therefore, ensure that mindset change becomes as important as achieving the physical targets", he further stated.
- **Elaborating** on some of the innovative initiatives taken under the Mission, he informed that while the first survey was among 73 cities, the second round of Survekshan was held among 434 cities. Swachh Survekshan 2018 has covered 4,203 cities, making it the largest such cleanliness survey in the world. Swachh Survekshan 2019 will cover all ULBs in the country. This ranking framework is introducing a healthy competition among all the participating ULBs. Mentioning about the star rating protocol for garbage free cities, he informed that MoHUA has launched a 'star rating protocol for garbage free cities' to motivate cities to achieve garbage free status. This protocol, designed on a SMART framework, addresses a city's complete Solid Waste Management chain across 12 cleanliness parameters.
- **In a first of its kind initiative** in the world MoHUA has partnered with Google to upload and make available on Google maps all the public and community toilets in the cities so that citizens and visitors are able to easily locate these facilities in their vicinity. So far this has been completed for more than 1000 cities/towns across the country. Through other initiatives such as thematic drives with citizen participation, engaging students and self-help groups to be the agents for social behaviour change, engaging swachhagrahis across the country to drive behaviour change, running multi-media communication campaigns with messages of 'swachhata', and use of various Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and apps (Swachhata app, Swachh Manch, 1969 Swachhata helpline) for greater citizen participation and engagement - there is now a growing appreciation among people that each of us is equally responsible for maintaining cleanliness of our surroundings.
- **The focus will now be not only** on sustaining the momentum but on accelerating the pace further through innovative, game changing approaches, continuous capacity building of Urban Local bodies, along with a strong regulatory and legal framework and strict enforcement.

Year End Review 2018- Ministry of Home Affairs

- **Major achievements of MHA:** Smooth conduct of local body elections in J&K, AFPSA lifted from parts of North-East, peaceful rollout of NRC in Assam, Improvement in LWL scenario, Smart fence on Western border, Launch of single digit pan-India emergency phone number '112', First India-China Agreement on Bilateral Security Cooperation and Unveiling of the National Police Memorial
- **Highlights** The Internal Security scenario during the year 2018 remained largely peaceful while the situation on the borders with Bangladesh, Myanmar and China has significantly improved. On the Western borders, the Security Forces have retaliated with equal measure to ceasefire violations and neutralised infiltration attempts. In J&K, concerted anti-militancy Operations have resulted in the elimination of a large number of terrorists while the local body elections were conducted smoothly. In the North-East, the security scenario has vastly improved during the last four years with the result the AFPSA was lifted from Meghalaya & parts of Arunachal Pradesh this year; the Draft NRC in Assam was published without any incidence of violence and the Final NRC is on course. In the hinterland, the LWL affected districts have shrunk from 76 in 2013 to just 58.
- **Under the Modernization** of Police Forces (MPF) programme, two pilot projects of smart fencing were unveiled along the Indo-Pak International Border in Jammu. Launch of a single digit pan-India emergency phone number '112', under the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS), has been heralded in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland. MHA set up a new Division to address Women's Safety issues while two separate portals, namely – Cyber Crime Prevention

against Women and Children (CCPWC) and National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), furthered Women's Safety issues.

- **Enhancement of Centre's share** in the State Disaster Response Fund from 75% to 90%, tremendous success of e-Visa, First India-China High Level Meeting on Bilateral Security Cooperation, conduct of regular meetings of the Zonal Councils, dedication of the National Police Memorial to the nation at the hands of Prime Minister and new Police Medals instituted are some of the other highlights of the Ministry of Home Affairs during the year gone by. J&K: Security Forces launch counter-terrorism Operations; successful conduct of local body elections
- **In Jammu and Kashmir**, amidst recurring incidents of stone pelting in the Kashmir Valley, the Union Government took a major conciliatory initiative in May, 2018 by declaring the Suspension of Operations in the State coinciding with the holy Ramazan month; however, after a review it was not extended beyond the Ramazan period following which the Security Forces launched concerted anti-militancy Operations resulting in significant gains. 238 terrorists were killed in as many as 587 incidents while 86 Security Forces personnel were martyred and 37 civilians killed this year as on December 2, 2108. In June the Union Ministry of Home Affairs conveyed its approval for raising two women Battalions for J&K Police.
- **Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh** paid a 2-day visit to J&K on June 7-8, 2018 where he announced sanction of grants-in-aid amounting to Rs. 14.30 crore for Bock level sports in the state under the 'Khelo India' Scheme by the Union Sports Ministry. The Union Home Minister paid another two-day visit to J&K the next month, on July 4-5, 2018, during which he reviewed the security situation and developmental issues in the State.
- **On 28th September MHA announced** New Initiatives in J&K undertaken by the State Government pursuant to the review meeting on 4-5 July, 2018 during Union Home Minister's visit to the state. Most significant of these was the peaceful conduct of the historic Local Body Elections. Ahead of the landmark local body elections in the State, the Union Home Minister again visited Srinagar on 23rd October and reviewed the security situation.
- **The local body elections** helped re-establish the long overdue grassroots level democracy in J&K. The urban local body elections were held after 2005 and Panchayat elections after 2011. These elections have paved the way for making available nearly Rs. 4,335 Crores of 14th Finance Commission Central grants to the duly constituted local bodies. Central Government provided all possible support to the State Government for smooth conduct of these elections including deployment of Central forces in sufficient numbers.
- **The Leh and Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Councils** have been strengthened and empowered to become the most autonomous councils in the country to address various issues being faced by people living in the remote areas of Ladakh region. The LAHDC & KAHDC have been given more powers to levy and collect local taxes. Control has been given over functioning of various departments as well as the Government employees working for the subjects that stand transferred to them.
- **Considering the crucial role** being played by the Special Police Officers in anti-militancy operations in J&K, MHA enhanced their honorarium from Rs 6,000 per month to 9,000 on completion of 5 years and Rs 12,000 on completion of 15 years. MHA also approved a scheme of Rs 5.5 Lakh financial assistance to nearly 5,764 West Pakistan Refugees settled in J&K. Peaceful North-East: AFPSA lifted from Meghalaya & parts of Arunachal; Peaceful rollout of Draft NRC; pacts with more insurgent groups
- **The security scenario** in the North East is constantly improving. Last year recorded the lowest insurgency incidents and casualties among the civilians and security forces in two decades since 1997. While there is almost no insurgency left in Tripura and Mizoram, there has been a marked improvement in security situation in other States of the region. In the last four years since 2014, there has been 63% reduction in insurgency incidents in the region. Similarly, there is huge reduction of 83% in civilian deaths and 40% in SF casualties in 2017, compared to 2014.
- **Further, the lifting** of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) from all areas of Meghalaya on 31st March is illustration of the vast improving security scenario in the NER. In Arunachal Pradesh also, areas under AFSPA have been reduced from 16 PS/Outposts areas bordering Assam to 8 Police Stations, besides Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts. The Centre extended ceasefire for one more year with NSCN/IM and NSCN/IM wef 28th April.
- **Continuing with the North-East**, in a major breakthrough on repatriation of displaced Bru persons from Mizoram since 1997, an agreement was signed on 3rd July by Government of India, Governments of Mizoram and Tripura and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) in presence of Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, Chief Minister of Mizoram, Shri Lalthanhawla and Chief Minister of Tripura, Shri Biplab Kumar Deb.
- **The incident-free rollout of Draft National Register** of Citizens (NRC) is a significant achievement. On 25th July, MHA issued guidelines to Assam State Government and neighbouring States to ensure maintenance of law & order in the run-up to and post-publication of Draft NRC on July 30, 2018. In the run-up to Draft NRC publication in Assam, Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh issued separate statements on 22nd & 30th July assuring that every individual will get justice and will be treated in a humane manner.
- **Union Home Minister** chaired the 67th Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong on July 9-10, 2018. HM urged the eight member states for effective implementation of the recently approved financial package of Rs 4,500 crore by the Centre and directed them to focus on specific areas and better convergence of the govt. sponsored schemes.
- **Left Wing Extremism (LWE)** affected areas shrink, development beckons Over the last four years, there has been a substantial improvement in the LWE scenario. Incidents of violence have seen a sharp decline while the geographical spread of LWE violence also shrunk from 76 districts in 2013 to just 58 districts. Besides, just 30 of these districts account for 90% of the LWE violence in the country. At the same time certain new districts have emerged as the focus of expansion by the Left Wing Extremists.
- **MHA undertook a comprehensive** exercise in consultation with the States to review the affected districts in order to ensure that the deployment of resources is in sync with the changed ground reality. Accordingly, 44 districts have been excluded and 08 new districts have been added to the list of Security Related Expenditure Scheme (SRE) districts.
- **The Union Home Minister** attended the passing out parade of 241 Bastariya Battalion of CRPF in Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh on 21st May. The 'Bastariya Battalion' that came into existence on 1st April 2017, has been created to enhance local representation in CRPF's combat layout in the Bastar area.

Internal Security: MHA sternly deals with incidents of mob lynching, vandalism and rumour mongering over the net

- **On the Internal Security front**, MHA issued two Advisories to the States on 7th March to sternly deal with incidents of vandalism of statues in some parts of the country. Advisories were also issued to the States to deal with incidents of mob lynching. On 23rd July, Government set up a High Level Committee (HLC) chaired by the Union Home Secretary to deliberate on incidents of mob lynching;
- **Government further** decided to constitute a Group of Ministers headed by the Union Home Minister to consider the recommendations of the HLC. On 25th October, Union Home Secretary chaired a review meeting with representatives of social media platforms on steps to check rumour-mongering and sexually abusive content over the net. This has been followed up with several meetings.

Border Management: Smart border fence unveiled

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

Modernization of Police Forces: Launch of ERSS

- **Modernization of Police Forces (MPF)** has been the topmost priority before the Government and the launch of single digit pan-India emergency phone number '112', under the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS), by the Union Home Minister in Himachal Pradesh on 28th November and in Nagaland on 1st December, marks a landmark milestone.
- **NCRB on 14th March unveiled a Mobile App** template, which is a bouquet of 9 police related services, for the citizen. These services will provide smooth interface between Citizens and Police. States/UTs upon customization can host this App on their CCTNS platform through which citizens can register Police Complaint, and can check the Status of their complaint. Another feature of the App also enables a complainant to download FIR (except those categorized as "Sensitive").

Women's Safety: New Division in MHA; launch of Cyber Crime reporting portal & database of habitual sexual offenders

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

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

- **On 22nd October**, the First India China High Level Meeting on Bilateral Security Cooperation was held in New Delhi. Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh and Mr. Zhao Kezhi, State Councillor and Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China led the respective delegations. An Agreement on Security Cooperation between the Ministry of Home Affairs of India and the Ministry of Public Security of China was also signed by the two Ministers. The Agreement further strengthens and consolidates discussions and cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism, organized crimes, drug control and other such relevant areas.
- **Earlier**, the Union Home Minister co-chaired the 6th meeting of the Home Minister level talks with his Bangladesh counterpart, Mr. Asaduzzaman Khan in Dhaka on 15th July. The two Ministers also witnessed the signing of the Revised Travel Arrangement 2018 (RTA 2018) amending the earlier RTA 2013 for further liberalizing the visa regime between the two countries, including enhanced duration for employment and student visas. During his 3-day visit, Shri Rajnath Singh also called on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Ms. Sheikh Hasina.
- **On 26th October** the 22nd National Level Meeting between India & Myanmar was held in New Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Rajiv Gauba, Union Home Secretary and the Myanmar delegation was led by Major General Aung Thu, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs. During the meeting both sides agreed to take action against insurgent groups operating within their territories. The two countries agreed on providing of security cooperation along with

international border and facilitating movement of people and trade across the border.

- **Union Home Minister** conducted a 4-day visit to Mongolia from June 21-24, 2018. During the visit, Home Minister along with the Prime Minister of Mongolia presided over the ground-breaking ceremony of Mongolia's first petrochemical refinery project. Home Minister also visited the headquarters of the Mongolian General Authority for Border Protection (GABP) and announced GOI's decision to provide a high capacity server for the GABP's main control centre in order to assist them in more efficient border management.
- **The Union Cabinet** on 7th February approved signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC), USA and Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), India on Law Enforcement Training.
- **On 28th March**, the Union Cabinet approved signing of an MoU between India and United Kingdom and Northern Ireland regarding cooperation and Exchange of Information for the Purposes of Combating International Criminality and Tackling Serious Organised Crime.
- **Union Home Secretary** Shri Rajiv Gauba co-chaired the Third Home Affairs' Dialogue between India and U.K. held in New Delhi on 30th May. Senior Officers Meeting on Homeland Security Dialogue between India and USA was held on 18th July.
- **The two-day meeting** of the Joint Steering Committee on Homeland and Public Security of India and Israel was held on February 27-28, 2018. Capacity building and modernization in the Police Forces besides border management issues were discussed.
- **A delegation from Morocco** visited MHA on 12th November and signed agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters with Indian team lead by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijju. The Union Cabinet had approved the Agreement on 1st November.
- **On 7th March**, the Union Cabinet approved an Agreement between India and France on the Prevention of the Illicit Consumption and Reduction of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Chemical Precursors, and related offences.
- **Union Home Minister** inaugurated the 2-day Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in New Delhi on 14th March and the Valedictory Session was addressed by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijju.
- **On 6th September**, the Union Home Minister inaugurated the 3-day Defence & Homeland Security Expo and Conference- 2018 in New Delhi.
- **Seamless** Centre-State relations: Regular Meetings of Zonal Councils conducted
- **It has been the objective** of the present Government to strengthen the institution of the Zonal Councils as well as the Inter-State Council in order to promote and maintain a good federal atmosphere of cooperation among the States and between the Centre and the States as well. As a result, during the last four years, more than 600 issues were discussed, out of which more than 400 issues resolved.
- **Standing Committee** of the Inter-State Council (ISC) headed by the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, at its meeting in New Delhi on 25th May, completed the onerous task of deliberations on all the 273 recommendations of the Punchhi Commission.
- **Earlier**, the 23rd Meeting of the Western Zonal Council was chaired by Union Home Minister at Ahmedabad on 26th April. The 28th meeting of the Southern Zonal Council was held under the Chairmanship the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh in Bengaluru on 18th September. Out of the 27 items discussed, 22 were resolved in the meeting. On 1st October, the Union Home Minister chaired the 23rd meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council in Kolkata, where 30 issues on agenda were discussed and 26 resolved.
- **Disaster Management** gets more funds from Centre: GoI enhances its contribution to SDRF from 75 to 90%; 4 new NDRF Battalions approved
- **Disaster Management** during natural or manmade calamity is another major responsibility the MHA has been tasked with. On 27th September, Government of India took an important decision to enhance its contribution in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) from 75% to 90%. w.e.f. 1st April 2018. Central Government will contribute 90 per cent and all States will contribute 10 per cent to the SDRF.
- **On 9th August**, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the raising of four additional Battalions of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at an estimated cost of Rs 637 crore. These four battalions will initially be raised as two battalions in ITBP and one battalion each in BSF and Assam Rifles. Later these four battalions will be converted into NDRF battalions. Based on the vulnerability profile, these four battalions will be placed in J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi NCR. At present there are 12 Battalions in NDRF which are deployed strategically across the country to provide immediate response.
- **The Vice-President** laid the Foundation Stone of Southern Campus building of the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) on 22nd May in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh.
- **The Task Force** constituted by the MHA presented its report on "Establishing a Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)" to the Union Home Minister on 2nd May. MHA and ISRO signed an MoU on 20th September for setting up of a state-of-the-art Integrated Control Room for Emergency Response (ICR-ER). It will cater to the requirement of Disaster Management as well as Internal Security.
- **During the July-August** floods in Kerala in two spells, Cabinet Secretary chaired six meetings of NCMC in as many days during August to review the flood situation in the state. Centre launched massive rescue and relief operations. In one of the largest rescue operations, 40 helicopters, 31 aircraft, 182 teams for rescue, 18 Medical Teams of Defence forces, 58 teams of NDRF, 7 companies of CAPFs were pressed into service along with over 500 boats and necessary rescue equipments. They successfully saved over 60,000 human lives by rescuing them from marooned areas and shifting them to relief camps. Defence aircrafts and helicopters made 1,084 sorties of duration 1,168 flying hours and airlifted 1,286 tonne of load and carried 3,332 rescuers.

- **On 21st July**, a Central Team led by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijiju reviewed the flood situation in Kerala, followed by a visit of the Union Home Minister to the flood affected areas of Kerala on 12th August. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi monitored the rescue & relief efforts on a daily basis and he visited the State on August 17-18, 2018.
- **The Centre** also provided urgent aid and relief material to Kerala in a timely manner and without any reservation. Central assistance of Rs.500 crore, as announced by the Prime Minister, and Rs.100 crore, announced by the Union Home Minister, for flood affected Kerala was released to the Government of Kerala on 21st August. This was in addition to Rs.562.45 crore already made available in SDRF of the State. Later, High Level Committee (HLC) meeting held on 6th December under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister approved the additional assistance from National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) of Rs 3,048.39 crore to Kerala.
- **On 4th August**, MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijiju visited flood affected areas in Nagaland.
- **NCMC** also met under chair of Cabinet Secretary on 10th October to take stock of preparatory measures in the wake of impending landfall of the cyclonic storm "TITLI" along the coast between Orissa and north Andhra Pradesh.
- **On 26th February**, the Union Home Minister chaired a meeting of the HLC, approving assistance of Rs 1711.66 crore in respect of state of Bihar. The HLC also approved assistance from NDRF amounting to Rs 1055.05 crore for the state of Gujarat, Rs 169.63 crore for the state for Kerala, Rs 420.57 crore for the state of Rajasthan, Rs 133.05 crore for the state of Tamil Nadu, Rs 420.69 crore for the state of Uttar Pradesh, Rs 838.85 crore for West Bengal, Rs 395.91 crore for Chhattisgarh and Rs 836.09 crore for the state of Madhya Pradesh. HLC on 14th May approved Central assistance of Rs 1,161.17 crores to states of Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Rajasthan and UT of Lakshadweep. HLC in its meeting on 29th June approved additional Central Assistance to the flood/drought hit States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.
- **On 12th September**, HLC and approved additional assistance from NDRF of Rs 157.23 crore for the state of Uttar Pradesh (affected by rabi drought during 2017-18) and Rs 60.76 crore for the state of Maharashtra (affected by pest attack & cyclone during 2017). On 31st October, Union Home Minister approved release of 2nd installment of Central Share of SDRF amounting to Rs. 229.05 crore, in advance for the year 2018-19, to help Andhra Pradesh in providing relief measures to the people affected by the 11th October severe cyclonic storm Titli. On 19th November, HLC approved the additional assistance from NDRF of Rs. 546.21 crore to Karnataka.
- **On 30th November**, the Union Home Minister approved to release the 2nd installment of Central Share of SDRF amounting to Rs. 353.70 crore, for the year 2018-19, as an interim relief to help Tamil Nadu in providing relief measures to the people affected by cyclone Gaja. HLC meeting held on 6th December approved additional assistance from NDRF to Kerala, besides Rs. 131.16 crore to Nagaland and Rs 539.52 crore to Andhra Pradesh.
- **Coinciding with the Police Commemoration Day**, on 21st October, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, speaking on the occasion, announced an award in the name of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, to honour those involved in disaster response operations. The award would be announced every year, recognizing the bravery and courage displayed in saving lives of people, in the wake of a disaster.
- **On 12th January**, the two-day International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (IWDR) was inaugurated by the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, in New Delhi; the Valedictory Session was addressed by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijiju. The Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, Dr. Rajiv Kumar inaugurated the First India-Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi on 19th March, while Shri Kiren Rijiju addressed the Valedictory Session. Shri Kiren Rijiju led a high level delegation to participate in Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), 2018 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 03-06 July, 2018.

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

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

New Police Medals instituted

- **In order to recognize the gallant efforts** of the CAPF personnel and encourage high standards of professionalism, the MHA announced on 28th June the institution of five Police Medals. - the Home Minister's Special Operation Medal, Antarik Suraksha Medal, Asadharan Aashuchan Padak, and Utkrish & Ati-Utkrish Seva Medal to promote professionalism and excellence in service and give recognition to those security personnel doing good work in stressful environment and in difficult areas.
- **Earlier in March**, the Government instituted the "Union Home Minister's Medal for Excellence in Police Investigation" to promote high professional standards of Investigation of Crime in the State/UT Police and Central Investigating Agencies in the country.
- **Officers from the rank of Sub-Inspector** to Superintendent of Police are eligible. Based on the average crime data for the last three years, a total of 162 medals will be awarded every year; of these, 137 will be for the States/UTs and 25 for the Central Investigating Agencies. The names of awardees will be declared on 15th August every year.
- **National Police Memorial dedicated to the Nation** The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, dedicated the National Police Memorial to the nation, on Police Commemoration Day, in New Delhi on 21st October. The memorial has been erected on 6.12 acres of land in Chanakyapuri, at the northern end of Shanti Path. The National Police Memorial consists of Central Sculpture, a Wall of Valour-engraved with the names of police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty and a State of Art Museum dedicated to the memory of the martyred police personnel.
- **This Police Memorial** represents all State/UT Police Forces and Central Police Organizations of the country. Since 1947, 34,844 police personnel have been martyred, with 424 losing their lives this year.
- **Launch of Student Police Cadet (SPC) programme** In a novel initiative, the Union Home Minister launched the Student Police Cadet (SPC) programme for nationwide implementation at a ceremony in Gurugram, Haryana on 21st July. The SPC programme focuses on students of Classes 8 & 9 and special care has been taken to ensure that it does not lead to increase in the workload of the students.
- **Career enhancement and welfare measures for CAPF jawans** The Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, on 10th January, approved the Cadre review of Group 'A' Executive Cadre of CISF. It provides for creation of 25 posts of various ranks from Assistant Commandant to Additional Director General ranks to enhance the supervisory staff in Senior Duty posts of CISF.
- **Union Home Minister** attended a ceremony in New Delhi on 20th January to raise funds for the "Bharat ke Veer" fund to assist the families of martyrs of the Central Armed Police Forces. Continuing with his practice over the years, Union Home Minister celebrated the New Year 2018 with ITBP Jawans in Uttarakhand.

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

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

Monuments of national importance

- **With 506 monuments** under its belt, Karnataka continues to top the list in South India, followed by Tamil Nadu (413). Nationally too, Karnataka is in the second place after Uttar Pradesh, which has 745 such monuments.
- **The six monuments declared as Monuments of national importance in 2018 are:** Old High Court Building in Nagpur, Maharashtra. Haveli of Agha Khan in Agra. Haveli of Hathi Khana in Agra. Neemrana Baori in Rajasthan's Alwar district. Group of Temples at Ranipur Jharail in Odisha's Bolangir district. Vishnu Temple in Kotali, Pithoragarh district, Uttarkhand.
- **What is an Ancient Monument?** According to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, any structure, sculpture, inscription, etc., which is in existence for not less than 100 years is termed ancient.
- **About ASI:** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.

- **Functions:** Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance is the prime concern of the ASI. Besides it regulate all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. It also regulates Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was formed in 1861 by a statute passed into law by Canning, with Alexander Cunningham as its first Archaeological Surveyor, to excavate and conserve India's ancient built heritage.

Suspension of MPs

- **The action** was taken under rule 374A of the Lok Sabha which says they cannot attend the remaining days of the session.
- **Provisions in this regard:** Among the tools available to the Speaker for ensuring discipline is the power to force a member to withdraw from the House (for the remaining part of the day), or to place him under suspension.
- **Rule Number 373** of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business states that in case the Speaker is of the opinion that the conduct of any member is "grossly disorderly", he or she may direct that member to "withdraw immediately from the House". The member is required to "do so forthwith", and stay away from the "remainder of the day's sitting".
- **The Speaker may** invoke Rule 374A in case of "grave disorder occasioned by a member coming into the well of the House or abusing the Rules of the House, persistently and wilfully obstructing its business by shouting slogans or otherwise...". The member concerned, "on being named by the Speaker, stands automatically suspended from the service of the House for five consecutive sittings or the remainder of the session, whichever is less".
- **While the Speaker** is empowered to place a member under suspension, the authority for revocation of this order is not vested in her. It is for the House, if it so desires, to resolve on a motion to revoke the suspension.
- **Similar powers to the Chairman of Rajya Sabha:** Chairman of the Rajya Sabha is empowered — under Rule Number 255 of its Rule Book — to "direct any member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately" from the House. "...Any member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall absent himself during the remainder of the day's meeting."
- **The Chairman may** "name a member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the Council by persistently and wilfully obstructing" business. In such a situation, the House may adopt a motion suspending the member from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session. The House may, however, by another motion, terminate the suspension. Unlike the Speaker, the Rajya Sabha Chairman does not have the power to suspend a member.

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

- **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.
- **WHY ARE PEOPLE IN ASSAM NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT?** The Citizenship Amendment Bill has not been sitting well with the Assamese as it contradicts the Assam Accord of 1985, which clearly states that illegal migrants heading in from Bangladesh after March 25, 1971, would be deported.
- **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.

Lead and MSG in noodles

- **National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC)** will now go-ahead with a class action suit brought against Maggi noodle makers Nestle.
- **What's the issue?** The apex court had allowed the case against Nestle to reopen after the Swiss food giant had admitted the presence of toxic ingredients in its noodles during a court hearing. Nestle's lawyers have admitted that toxic elements like lead and MSG are found in its sample tests conducted by CFTRI (Central Food Technological Research Institute), Mysuru. However, the company has argued that the lead was within the permissible limit.
- **Effects of lead and MSG on health: Lead:** According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), lead is a cumulative toxicant that affects multiple body systems, including your liver and kidneys in particular.
- **It is especially harmful** to infant and pregnant women as it can cause damage to the central nervous system in children. Since lead is a heavy metal it can get stored in the teeth and bones, where it accumulates over time. In pregnant women, prolonged exposure to lead can result in miscarriage, prematurity, low birth weight, etc.
- **Monosodium glutamate:** MSG, short for Monosodium glutamate, is an amino acid found in your body and most foods. It is a flavour enhancer commonly added to Chinese food, canned vegetables, soups, and processed meats. When consumed in excess, it can cause several health issues, including a headache, nausea, sweating, weakness, chest pain, tingling or burning in the face as well as neck and other areas. It is claimed that MSG can cause asthma and even brain damage.
- **MSG may cause** adverse symptoms in some people, including a condition called Chinese restaurant syndrome or MSG symptom complex. However, there is no definitive evidence that MSG is solely responsible for causing these symptoms.
- **About NCDRC:** The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), India is a quasi-judicial commission in India which was set up in 1988 under the Consumer Protection Act of 1986. The commission is headed by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court of India.
- **Statutory provisions:** Section 21 of Consumer Protection Act, 1986 posits that the National Consumer shall have jurisdiction to entertain a complaint valued more than one crore and also have Appellate and Revisional jurisdiction from the orders of State Commissions or the District fora as the case may be.
- **Section 23 of Consumer Protection Act, 1986,** provides that any person aggrieved by an order of NCDRC, may prefer an Appeal against such order to Supreme Court of India within a period of 30 days.

Challenges for start-ups in India

- **Challenge for start-ups:** Corruption Bureaucratic inefficiencies. Securing loans. Funding
- **Angel tax:** Angel tax is one area that falls under corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies as it takes the focus of entrepreneurs away from building a product or service to responding to tax notices and filing appeals, something that start-ups can clearly do without.
- **Angel tax** continued to be a key pain point for start-ups, where the assessing officers in many cases reject the valuation method used by the start-up and instead treat the capital raised as income from other sources, thereby, raising a tax demand and penalty on the start-up. Several start-ups and angel investors have raised concerns over notices received from the authorities related to taxation of angel funds. The Centre has set up a panel to look into the taxation issues faced by start-ups and angel investors.
- **What is Angel Tax?** Angel Tax is a 30% tax that is levied on the funding received by startups from an external investor. However, this 30% tax is levied when startups receive angel funding at a valuation higher than its 'fair market value'. It is counted as income to the company and is taxed.

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

Bharatmala Pariyojana

- **As per the internal and extra budgetary** resources approved for 2018-19 by the government, a sum of Rs62,000 crore is to be raised by NHAI through various instruments/sources including Bharatmala bonds.
- **What is Bharatmala project?** Bharatmala Project is the second largest highways construction project in the country since NHDP, under which almost 50,000 km or highway roads were targeted across the country. Bharatmala will look to improve connectivity particularly on economic corridors, border areas and far flung areas with an aim of quicker movement of cargo and boosting exports.
- **About NHAI:** The National Highways Authority of India was constituted by an act of Parliament, the National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988. It is responsible for the development, maintenance and management of National Highways entrusted to it and for matters connected or incidental thereto. The Authority was operationalised in Feb, 1995.

GEF assisted Green – Ag Project to transform Indian Agriculture

- **About the Project:** The project would be implemented in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in high-conservation-value landscapes of five States namely, (i) Madhya Pradesh: Chambal Landscape, (ii) Mizoram: Dampa Landscape, (iii) Odisha: Similipal Landscape, (iv) Rajasthan: Desert National Park Landscape and v) Uttarakhand: Corbett-Rajaji Landscape.
- **The Green-Ag project** seeks to integrate biodiversity, climate change and sustainable land management objectives and practices into Indian agriculture. The project aims to catalyze a transformative change of India's agricultural sector to support the achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes.
- **The project** supports harmonization between India's agricultural and environmental sector priorities and investments to realise the national and global environmental benefits without compromising on India's ability to strengthen rural livelihoods and meet its food and nutrition security.
- **About GEF:** The Global Environment Facility was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. It is an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector that addresses global environmental issues.
- **GEF funds** are available to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meet the objectives of the international environmental conventions and agreements. The World Bank serves as the GEF Trustee, administering the GEF Trust Fund.

Action against Industries Polluting Ganga River

- **Government of India** has launched the Namami Gange Programme in May 2015, with the total budgetary outlay of Rs. 20,000 crore for the period from 2014-2015 till 31 December 2020 to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga and its tributaries.
- **Namami Gange Programme** – is an umbrella programme which integrates previous and currently ongoing initiatives by enhancing efficiency, extracting synergies and supplementing them with more comprehensive & better coordinated interventions. Government of India is supplementing the efforts of the state governments in addressing the pollution of river Ganga by providing financial assistance to the states. 961 Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) have been identified on main stem of river Ganga.
- **Cleaning of the river** is a continuous process and efforts are being made to complete the projects by the year 2020 for creating adequate Sewage Treatment Capacity.
- **Background:** Each day, more than 500 million liters of wastewater from industrial sources are dumped directly into Ganga. In many places, this wastewater entering the rivers is completely raw, completely untreated.
- **Main Pillars of the Namami Gange Programme are:** Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure River-Surface Cleaning Afforestation Industrial Effluent Monitoring River-Front Development Bio-Diversity Public Awareness Ganga Gram
- **Its implementation has been divided into:** Entry-Level Activities (for immediate visible impact), Medium-Term Activities (to be implemented within 5 years of time frame) and Long-Term Activities (to be implemented within 10 years). National Mission for Clean Ganga, endeavors to deploy best available knowledge and resources across the world for Ganga rejuvenation. Clean Ganga has been a perennial attraction for many international countries that have expertise in river rejuvenation.
- **Countries like** Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, Israel, etc. have shown interest in collaborating with India for Ganga Rejuvenation.

India – Myanmar – Thailand Trilateral Highway

- **The 1360 kms** long India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is an initiative pertaining to India, Myanmar and Thailand. India is undertaking construction of two sections of the Trilateral Highway in Myanmar namely,
- **Construction** of 120.74 KM Kalewa-Yagyi road section, and Construction of 69 bridges along with the approach road on the 149.70 KM Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa (TKK) road section.
- **Both these sections** were awarded on Engineering, Procurement and Construction mode in May 2018 for Kalewa-Yagyi section and November 2017 for the TTK section. The scheduled time for completion of both the projects is three years from the date of commencement at the project site by the executing agency. The above mentioned projects are funded by Government of India under Grant Assistance to the Government of Myanmar.
- **Other Information:** A Motor Vehicles Agreement along with protocols for regulating and facilitating movement of cargo and passenger vehicular traffic is under inter-governmental negotiations between India, Myanmar and Thailand.
- **Background:** The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is a highway under construction under India's Look East Policy that will connect Moreh, India with Mae Sot, Thailand via Myanmar. The road will boost the trade and commerce in the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area, and with the rest of Southeast Asia. India has also proposed extending the highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.
- **Look-East Policy:** India's Look East Policy is an effort being made by the Indian government to cultivate and strengthen economic and strategic relations with the nations of Southeast Asia in order to solidify its standing as a regional power. This policy also serves to position India as a counterweight to the strategic influence of the People's Republic of China in the region.
- **Look-East Connectivity:** Commerce with South and East Asian nations accounts for almost 45% of India's foreign trade. Myanmar and ASEAN nations are part of India's Look East Policy.

Makaravilakku festival season:

- **Context:** The hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa in Kerala has been opened for the 21 day-long Makaravilakku festival season, marking the concluding phase of the annual pilgrimage season.

- **About Makaravilakku festival season:** Makaravilakku is an annual festival held on Makar Sankranti in Kerala, at the shrine of Sabarimala. The festival includes the Thiruvabharanam (sacred ornaments of Ayyappan) procession and a congregation at the hill shrine of Sabarimala.
- **Institutions in News- DRI:** Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, formed in 1957, is the major intelligence agency which eradicates smuggling of drugs, gold, diamonds, electronics, foreign currency, counterfeit Indian currency, etc. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence functions under the Central Board of Excise and Customs in the Ministry of Finance, Department of Revenue.
- **The Directorate** is run by officers from Central Excise and Customs. Though its early days were committed to combating smuggling in of gold, it has now tuned itself to the changing nature of crimes in the field of narcotics and economic crimes.



2018 Year End Review: Ministry of I&B

- **The Ministry** of Information and Broadcasting is one of the vital Ministries that represent the face of the government in reaching out to the masses. The Ministry is entrusted with the task of disseminating information about government policies, schemes and programmes through the different mediums of communication.
- **The Ministry** took several key initiatives in the year 2018 to meet these objectives, a snapshot of which is presented below.
- **Information Sector** Bureau of Outreach and Communication formed through integration of Directorate of Advertising & Visual Publicity (DAVP), Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP) and Song & Drama Division (S&DD) for ensuring synergy between the media units which were otherwise working in silos.
- **Reference Annual India 2018** and भारत 2018 released - the flagship publications brought out by Publications Division. The two Reference Annuals were also made available as e-book in the most commonly used e-PUB format so that they could be easily accessed on a variety of devices such as tablets, computers, e-readers and smartphones.
- **Reconstitution of Committee** on Journalist Welfare Scheme - for the first time, journalists were also made members of the Committee. It was also made leaner with only Secretary (I&B), Joint Secretary (P&A), Principal Director General, PIB as official members.
- **DeenDayalUpadhyay Scholarship** announced for people of Indian Origin who have done exemplary work in the field of development journalism. Special Yojana issue on 'employment and self-employment' released - covered wide ranging issues including those related to livelihood opportunities, entrepreneurship, employment data; also featured success stories of programmes like MUDRA Yojana
- **Multimedia Exhibition** on 150 years of Celebrating Mahatma Gandhi's Birth Anniversary organized by Bureau of Outreach and Communication. The Exhibition had many engaging features like Quiz on the life of Mahatma Gandhi, interactive timeline depicting life of Mahatma Gandhi, Photo Booth with various backgrounds to choose from, 3D Video Wall, etc. It also showcased several books on the Life of Mahatma Gandhi.
- **"The Republican Ethic" and "LoktantraKeSwar"** book released - selected speeches of President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, brought out by Directorate of Publications Division.

Broadcast Sector

- **15th Asia Media Summit** organized in Delhi with the theme, 'Telling Our Stories – Asia and More'; it encouraged dialogue and cooperation in Media Sector in the Region
- **All India Radio** streaming services launched on Amazon Alexa Smart Speakers - a synergy of the old and modern forms of communication. The initiative will also benefit Indian diaspora since now anyone from any part of the world can listen to the programmes in All India Radio through Alexa.
- **9 DSNG vans of Doordarshan** flagged off - with 4 of these 9 DSNGs meant for Gangtok, Kohima, Imphal and Agartala, the development stories of the people of North-East will further reach out to people.

Films Sector

- **Agreement on Film Co-production** between India and Israel signed - to facilitate mutual exchange of art and culture, create goodwill and better understanding among the people of both the countries as well as various aspects of film making. The Agreement will also help in generation of employment among artistic, technical as well as non-technical personnel.
- **65th National Film Awards organized** - Late veteran Actor Shri Vinod Khanna awarded DadasahebPhalke Award; Late eminent Actress, Sridevi awarded Best Actress for the Hindi movie Mom; Riddhi Sen given Best Actor award for Nagarkirtan; Assamese movie Village Rockstars awarded Best Feature Film and Baahubali - The Conclusion awarded as Best Popular Film providing Wholesome Entertainment; Jayaraj given Best Direction Award for Malayalam movie Bhayanakam.
- **ASEAN India Film Festival organized in Delhi** - the festival acts as a vehicle of cultural exchange and facilitates people to people contact in member countries, especially amongst youth.
- **Dedicated web portallaunched by Film Facilitation** Office to disseminate information on filming locations and the facilities available in India for film production/post production and to allow foreign film makers to make online application for permission of shooting of feature films, reality TV shows and commercial TV series in India.
- **India Pavilion was organized at Cannes Film Festival 2018**, along with exploration of co-production opportunities between India and France in May 2018. India Pavilion was also set up in Berlin Film Festival (Feb 2018) and Toronto International Film Festival (Sep 2018).
- **India hosts European Union Film Festival** - 24 latest European films from 23 EU Member States screened. The festival traversed through 11 cities in India including New Delhi, Chennai, Port Blair, Pune, Puducherry, Kolkata, Jaipur, Visakhapatnam, Thrissur, Hyderabad and Goa from 18th June till 31st August 2018.
- **India Pavilion organized at Videocittà 2018** in Rome Film Festival. India was the partner country at Videocittà 2018, an event focussing on Virtual Reality, Video gaming, Animation, Film Making, etc. India Pavilion atVideocittà 2018 showcased Indian films' heritage, ease of film shooting in India, promoted film shooting locations in India, International Film Festival of India, Indian Cinema from different regions and Audio Visual Co Production between India and Italy.
- **49th International Film Festival of India** organized in Goa. Israel was the country in focus and Jharkhand was the state in focus during the Festival. The Festival opened with the world premiere of 'The Aspern Papers'. 'Donbass' directed by Sergei Loznitsa has won the coveted Golden Peacock; Lijo Jose Pellissery was conferred Best Director Award for 'Ee.Ma.Yau'; Chemban Vinod was declared the Best Actor (Male) and Anastasiia Pustovit got Best Actor (Female) Award. Dan Wolman was given the Lifetime Achievement Award. Master Scriptwriter Salim Khan was presented with IFFI Special Award at IFFI 2018 Closing Ceremony, for his Lifetime Contribution to Cinema.

Cyclonic Storm 'PABUK' over Andaman Sea & neighbourhood

- **Cyclone warning** for Andaman Islands "ORANGE MESSAGE"
- **The cyclonic storm 'PABUK'** over Andaman Sea & neighbourhood moved further west-northwestwards with a speed of 13 kmph in past 06 hours. It lay centered at 1430 hours IST of today, the 05th January, 2019 over Andaman Sea & neighbourhood near latitude 9.5°N and longitude 97.3°E, about 550 km east-southeast of Port Blair.
- **It is very likely** to move west-northwestwards for some more time. Thereafter, it is very likely to move northwestwards and cross Andaman Islands around evening of 06th January as a Cyclonic Storm with a wind speed of 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph.
- **Thereafter**, it is very likely to move north-northwestwards and then recurve northeastwards towards Myanmar coast and weaken gradually during 07th-08th January, 2019.

Panj Tirath Hindu religious site declared as national heritage

- **The government** also announced a fine of up to Rs 2 million and five years' imprisonment for anyone found guilty of damaging the historic site.
- **About Panj Tirath:** Panj Tirath, which got its name from the five pools of water present there, also contains a temple and a lawn with date palm trees.

- **It is believed** that Pandu, a mythical king in the Mahabharata, belonged to this area and Hindus used to come to these pools for bathing during the month of Kartik and worship for two days under the trees. The site was damaged during the reign of the Afghan Durrani dynasty in 1747, however it was restored by local Hindus during the period of Sikh rule in 1834 and worship started again.

Appointment of Lokpal

- **Background:** A contempt petition has been filed in the court against the government for not appointing Lokpal despite an April 2017 judgment by the Supreme Court. The court has for the past several months been constantly urging the government to complete the Lokpal appointment.
- **Highlights of the Lokpal Act of 2013:** The Act allows setting up of anti-corruption ombudsman called Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta at the State-level. The Lokpal will consist of a chairperson and a maximum of eight members. The Lokpal will cover all categories of public servants, including the Prime Minister. But the armed forces do not come under the ambit of Lokpal.
- **The Act also** incorporates provisions for attachment and confiscation of property acquired by corrupt means, even while the prosecution is pending. The States will have to institute Lokayukta within one year of the commencement of the Act. The Act also ensures that public servants who act as whistleblowers are protected.
- **Powers:** The Lokpal will have the power of superintendence and direction over any investigation agency including CBI for cases referred to them by the ombudsman. As per the Act, the Lokpal can summon or question any public servant if there exists a prima facie case against the person, even before an investigation agency (such as vigilance or CBI) has begun the probe. Any officer of the CBI investigating a case referred to it by the Lokpal, shall not be transferred without the approval of the Lokpal.
- **An investigation** must be completed within six months. However, the Lokpal or Lokayukta may allow extensions of six months at a time provided the reasons for the need of such extensions are given in writing. Special courts will be instituted to conduct trials on cases referred by Lokpal.

Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana

- **Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana:** Under the scheme, the government of Maharashtra has decided to give two LED bulbs, a DC fan and a mobile charging socket as freebies to farmers. The scheme provides a subsidy of up to 95% on solar pumpsets. The State plans to install one lakh solar pumps.
- **Eligibility:** Under the Scheme, farmers with less than five acres will have to pay 5% of the cost of a 3 HP solar pump while farmers with more than five acres will get a 5 HP solar pump for Rs 30000. The Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Co Ltd (MSEDCL) is the implementing agency.
- **Significance:** The scheme would be beneficial to farmers who reside in remote areas where the agricultural feeder is not possible.

Street Light National Programme (SLNP)

- **Energy Efficiency Services Limited** has installed over 76.77 lakh LED street lights in 28 States or Union Territories till January 3, 2019.
- **About Street Light National Programme (SLNP):** Under the SLNP, the Government aims to replace 3.5 crore conventional street lights with energy efficient LED lights. The target under SLNP is to replace 1.34 crore conventional street lights with energy efficient LED street lights by March 2019.
- **The project** has been implemented across 28 states and union territories. Energy Efficiency Services Limited, a Public Energy Services Company under the administration of Ministry of Power, Government of India (GoI) is the implementing agency for SLNP. EESL also undertakes social audits in all states post the completion of the project.
- **Objectives:** Mitigate climate change by implementing energy efficient LED based street lighting. Reduce energy consumption in lighting which helps DISCOMs to manage peak demand. Provide a sustainable service model that obviates the need for upfront capital investment as well as additional revenue expenditure to pay for procurement of LED lights. Enhance municipal services at no upfront capital cost of municipalities.

- **Significance:** The installation of LED-based street lighting system is essential, since LED lighting offer higher efficiency, better illumination and life expectancy apart from being environmentally sustainable.
- **What you need to know about EESL?** Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a joint venture of NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation, Rural Electrification Corporation and POWERGRID. It was set up under Ministry of Power (India) to facilitate implementation of energy efficiency projects.

Indian Science Congress

- **Theme** – Future India: Science and Technology.
- **Background:** Indian Science Congress is organised by the Indian Science Congress Association every year in the first week of January.
- **About Indian Science Congress Association:** The Indian Science Congress Association was started in the year 1914 in Kolkata and has a membership of more than 30,000 scientists.
- **Origin:** It owes its origin to the foresight and initiative of two British chemists, namely, Professor J. L. Simonsen and Professor P. S. MacMahon. It occurred to them that scientific research in India might be stimulated if an annual meeting of research workers somewhat on the lines of the British Association for the Advancement of Science could be arranged.
- **Objectives:** To advance and promote the cause of science in India. To hold an annual congress at a suitable place in India. To publish such proceedings, journals, transactions and other publications as may be considered desirable.
- **To secure** and manage funds and endowments for the promotion of Science including the rights of disposing of or selling all or any portion of the properties of the Association. To do and perform any or all other acts, matters and things as are conducive to, or incidental to, or necessary for, the above objects.

Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2019

- **About CCPI:** The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) is an instrument covering 58 countries and supposed to enhance transparency in international climate politics.
- **Its aim** is to encourage political and social pressure on those countries which have, up to now, failed to take ambitious actions on climate protection as well as to highlight countries with best-practice climate policies.
- **Evaluation:** On the basis of standardised criteria, the index evaluates and compares the climate protection performance of 58 countries that are, together, responsible for more than 90% of global energy-related CO₂ emissions. 80% of the evaluation is based on objective indicators of emissions trend and emissions level. 20% of the index results are built upon national and international climate policy assessments by more than 200 experts from the respective countries.
- **Highlights of the report:** Only few countries have started working towards limiting global warming below 2°C or even at 1.5°C. Globally, Sweden is in top position, followed by Morocco and Lithuania in the CCPI 2019. The bottoms five in the list are Saudi Arabia, U.S., Iran, South Korea and Taiwan.
- **India's Performance:** India ranks 11th in this year's CCPI, improving its standing by three places compared to the previous edition.

China develops its own 'Mother of All Bombs'

- **It is dubbed** as the Chinese version of the "Mother of All Bombs" due to its huge destruction potential that is claimed to be only second to nuclear weapons.

- **Background:** Last year, while waging war against militants in Afghanistan, the US military dropped a GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) weapon, more commonly known as the “Mother of All Bombs,” on the Islamic State. Although China is using the same nickname for its bomb, said to weigh several tonnes, the Chinese weapon is smaller and lighter than its American counterpart.
- **Mother of all Bombs:** The Moab or GBU-43/B is the world’s largest non-nuclear weapon. It is designed to destroy heavily reinforced targets or to shatter ground forces and armour across a large area. Its blast is equivalent to 11 tons of TNT. By comparison, the nuclear weapon dropped on Hiroshima had a blast yield of 15 tons of TNT. While it has a blast radius that stretches a mile in each direction the bomb leaves no lasting radiation effect because it is non-nuclear.
- **Father of all Bombs:** To match the U.S. weapon, Russia developed the “Father of All Bombs” which is both bigger and thermobaric, meaning it uses gas to create a huge fireball rather than a shockwave.

‘Yutu 2’

- **Key facts:** It follows the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System — China’s homegrown Global Positioning System that started worldwide service last month.
- **The rover** has been programmed to launch ground penetration radar that would help map the moon’s inner structures.
- **It would** also analyse soil and rock samples for minerals, apart from activating a radio telescope to search for possible signals from deep space.

National Entrepreneurship Awards 2018

- **National Entrepreneurship Awards 2018**, aimed at recognizing and honoring outstanding young first-generation entrepreneurs and those who have contributed immensely in building the entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- **About this third edition of National Entrepreneurship Awards:** A total of 43 awards were given, including 39 awards for Young Entrepreneurs in different sectors and 4 awards for Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Builders.
- **About National Entrepreneurship Award –** To catalyze a cultural shift in youth for entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has instituted the National Entrepreneurship Awards (NEA) to recognize and honour outstanding young first generation Entrepreneurs and their Ecosystem Builders for their outstanding contribution in entrepreneurship development.

Menstrual Hygiene for Adolescent girls Schemes

- **To address** the need of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls residing primarily in rural areas, Government of India is supporting the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme.
- **Under the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme –** Funds are provided to States/UTs through National Health Mission for decentralized procurement of sanitary napkins packs for provision primarily to rural adolescent girls at subsidized rates as per proposals received from the States and UTs in their Programme Implementation Plans.
- **This scheme is encompassing the following:** Increasing awareness among adolescent girls on Menstrual Hygiene Improving access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins by adolescent girls in rural areas. Ensuring safe disposal of Sanitary Napkins in an environmentally friendly manner. Provision of funds to ASHAs to hold monthly meeting with adolescents to discuss issues related to menstrual hygiene.
- **Information Education and Communication (IEC) Material Developed:** A range of IEC material has been developed, using a 360 degree approach to create awareness among adolescent girls about safe & hygienic menstrual health practices including audio, video and reading materials for adolescent girls and job-aids for ASHAs and other field level functionaries for communicating with adolescent girls.

- **ASHAs across the country** are trained and play a significant role in promotion of use and distribution of the sanitary napkins. Department of Health Research, under the Ministry of Health, is involved in assessment of all newer, alternative, environment friendly menstrual hygiene products to look into their safety and acceptability features.
- **Background:** About Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) One of the key components of the National Rural Health Mission is to provide every village in the country with a trained female community health activist ASHA. Selected from the village itself and accountable to it, the ASHA will be trained to work as an interface between the community and the public health system.
- **Other Information of Menstrual Hygiene Scheme** – The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been implementing this scheme for promotion of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in the age group of 10-19 years primarily in rural areas as part of the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram.

Mission Indradhanush

- **'Mission Indradhanush'** has been selected as one of the 12 best practices globally and has been featured in a special issue of the British Medical Journal titled 'Improving vaccination coverage in India: lessons from Intensified Mission Indradhanush, a cross-sectoral systems strengthening strategy'.
- **Mission Indradhanush** was showcased during the 'Partner's Forum' held at New Delhi on 12th-13th December 2018 which was attended by around 1200 international and national delegates working on Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health.
- **Background:** Mission Indradhanush – To strengthen and re-energize the programme and achieve full immunization coverage for all children and pregnant women at a rapid pace, the Government of India launched "Mission Indradhanush" in December 2014.
- **Mission Indradhanush's Goal** – The ultimate goal is to ensure full immunization with all available vaccines for children up to two years of age and pregnant women. The Government has identified 201 high focus districts across 28 states that have the highest number of partially immunized and unimmunized children.
- **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)** – To further intensify the immunization programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Intensified Mission (IMI) on October 8, 2017.
- **Government of India** aims to reach each and every child up to two years of age and all those pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunization programme/UIP.

New Delhi World Book Fair:

- **What is it?** New Delhi World Book Fair is a platform for displaying our rich treasure of knowledge through books. It is not just an opportunity for a reader but it also provides a huge platform to the publishers who exhibit their numerous books at the event.
- **Organizers:** Organised by National Book Trust, in association with ITPO. The theme of the 27th edition of the New Delhi World Book Fair is "Readers with special needs".



Year End Review 2018- Ministry of AYUSH

- **All India Institute of Ayurveda, (AIIA) Phase-II Started--- National Institute of Homoeopathy Being Set Up** Main Event of International Day of Yoga Celebrated in Dehradun--50,000 People Performed Yoga Along with the PM Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Act, 2018 Comes in to Effect IT Education Launched for Ayush Professionals in Collaboration with C-DAC
- **The Ministry of AYUSH** through its multi pronged strategy in year 2018 has been able to bring alternative system of medicine particularly Ayurveda and Homeopathy in to mainstream of the public health system in India. During the year, usage of Information Technology in AYUSH system was given prominence, new Hospital and Research Centers opened and MoUs signed with several stakeholders including several Ministries and Countries for disseminating benefits of traditional systems all over the country and abroad.
- **The Ministry** continued to propagate, publicise and popularise the alternate system of medicine with an aim of minimising the gap between demand and supply of medical facilities in the country. Following are the significant achievements and details of the important activities of Ministry of AYUSH during the year.
- **Reform Measures** The Central Government promulgated the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018, (No.4 of 2018) dated 18th May, 2018. Through the Ordinance, the Central Council of Homoeopathy(CCH), the statutory regulatory body for Homoeopathy system of medicine has been superseded by Board of Governors with a view to bring necessary regulatory reforms in the field of Homoeopathy education and ensuring transparency and accountability for improving standards in Homoeopathy medical education.
- **In order to ensure transparency**, improve the quality and functioning of AYUSH colleges, the President had promulgated the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 on 18th May, 2018 with the following objectives:-
- **(a) To constitute** a Board of Governors by superseding the Central Council of Homoeopathy till a new Central Council was duly reconstituted within a period of one year from the date of supersession of the Central Council;
- **(b) To make provision** for obtaining prior permission of the Central Government by all Homoeopathy Medical Colleges for admission.
- **In order to replace the ordinance with an Act**, the Ministry introduced the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2018 during the Monsoon session of the Parliament. This has been approved by the President on 13th August, 2018 and the corresponding Act, namely, Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Act, 2018 published in the Gazette of India as Act No. 23 of 2018.

Establishment of Central Institutes

- **The foundation stone** of National Institute of Homoeopathy at Narela, Delhi has been laid by MoS for AYUSH Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, on 16th October, 2018. Total project Cost is Rs. 259.12 crore. An All India Institute of Ayurveda, (AIIA) Phase-II SaritaVihar has also been started this year. The total Project Cost is Rs. 209.33 Crore.
- **Use of Information Technology in AYUSH Sector** A new course on IT education was launched for AYUSH professionals in collaboration with C-DAC.
- **Ministry of AYUSH** has registered a remarkable presence on social media. AYUSH systems have been promoted on Ministry's various Social Media Platforms i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Blog and Twitter and also at MyGov Platform to benefit the various strata of population about the AYUSH systems.
- **Ministry** is also developing a cloud based AYUSH GRID under the digital India mission. All the AYUSH Teaching Institutes, Hospitals and industry will be linked to AYUSH Grid.
- **The Ministry of AYUSH** was on the top spot of Broadcast Audience Research Council's (BARC) top 10 brands during the week 25 (June 16-22, 2018) with 14,731 insertions.

MoUs at National and International level

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

Yoga a Mass Movement

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

Prime Minister's Yoga Awards

- **One of the highlights** of IDY observation is the announcement of the Prime Minister's Yoga Awards. The awards are given away each year for exemplary contribution in the field of Yoga towards the development and promotion of Yoga.
- **This year the Awards have been conferred on one individual and one institution, as follows:** (i) Sh. Vishwas Vasant Mandalik, Nasik (National – Individual category) (ii) The Yoga Institute, Mumbai (National – Institution category)
- **Yoga Ambassadors' Tour:** The Yoga Ambassadors' Tour being organized in collaboration with Kerala Tourism on 14th June, 2018. 52 participants from 22 countries joined in the Yoga Tour. The tour was culminated on 21st June, 2018 with a grand celebration of International Day of Yoga.
- **The Ministry of AYUSH**, through Central Council for Research in Yoga & Naturopathy (CCRYN), had organized one-month free Yoga training programme in around 600 districts across the country through Govt. Organisations/ NGOs, ahead of IDY. It had also organized 11 one day workshop on Yoga for Women in the 40+ age group in association with Indian Menopause Society in different parts of the country.
- **International Naturopathy Organisation (INO)** had trained more than 51 lakh people in Yoga during the IDY-2018. Several State Governments like Punjab, Haryana, UP etc. have trained people on this occasion in large numbers.

- **Two mobile technology based applications** deployed by the Ministry, namely BHUVAN-YOGA (developed by ISRO) and Yoga Locator, contributed to the public mobilization for IDY-2018. The former helped to assess the magnitude of participation at different venues and the later helped the public to locate events near them. The data collected through these apps are being analysed and collated statistically to gather a better picture of the extent of participation in IDY-2018.

National level Events

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

National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) :

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

Other Achievements

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

- **Pharmacovigilance of ASU&H drugs:** A Central Sector Scheme of 'Pharmacovigilance Initiative for ASU&H Drugs' has been implemented by the Ministry of AYUSH from the financial year 2017-18. The scheme has established a National Pharmacovigilance Coordination centre for collecting reports on quality aspects from 05 intermediary and 43 peripheral centres with a financial allocation to the tune of Rs 1.66 crore approved for implementation of the initiative in 2018-19.
- **NABH Accreditation:** For the first time, the Ministry of AYUSH through its continuous efforts has got the hospitals viz., National Institute of Naturopathy, Pune, Maharashtra, National Institute of Unani Medicine, Bangalore, Karnataka, National Institute of Yoga, Delhi and National Institute of Siddha, Chennai, NABH accredited. Ministry of AYUSH has made it obligatory for AYUSH hospitals for their accreditation to NABH standards with a view to enhancing the quality and safety aspects. Till date a total of 62 AYUSH hospitals have got the NABH accreditation.

“Ayush” Finds a Place in English Language

- **In pursuance of the proposal** of the Ministry of AYUSH the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology has decided to adopt the word “AYUSH” in Hindi and English languages for scientific and technical purposes. As approved by the Commission, the word “AYUSH” will have the meaning “Traditional and Non-Conventional Systems of Health Care and Healing which include Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, Homoeopathy etc.”

Major Activities of Research Councils:

- **Development of new drugs and commercialisation:** CCRAS has developed new drugs for different disease conditions. These are AYUSH Manas for Mental retardation/cognitive deficit, AYUSH QOL for improving quality of life of Cancer patients, AYUSH Rasayan A & B in geriatric health, AYUSH M-3 for Migraine, AYUSH SL for Filariasis, AYUSH A for Bronchial Asthma, AYUSH D for Type II Diabetes Mellitus, Carctol S for Cancer, AYUSH K1 for chronic Kidney Diseases, Ayurveda drug for Non-Alcoholic fatty liver disease and Ayurveda drug as adjuvant to ATT for hepatoprotection. These formulations are at different phases of drug development.
- **Commercialisation of drugs:** Further CCRAS has commercialized already developed products namely Ayush-82 for Type –II Diabetes and Ayush SG for Rheumatoid arthritis NRDC in last two years and now these formulations are already available in the market for general public which are cost effective and the people are using these formulations for diabetes and Rheumatoid arthritis. The Council has also commercialised AYUSH 64.
- **In Central Council of Research** in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) one project each in Collaboration Clinical Research, Medicinal plant Research Drug standardization, Literary Research have been completed. Total 4 projects have been completed during October, 2018.
- **Central Council of Research in Ayurveda (CCRAS)** has completed Clinical Research in 1 IMR project. 1 IMR project of Drug Standardization Programme and 1 IMR project of Clinical Research, has been initiated.
- **Officials from Central Council for Research in Siddha (CCRS)** attended and presented the Research work of the IMR project entitled “Geo-chemical characterization of Muppu” in the 1st National Bio-Medical Research competition on the occasion of 87th anniversary of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam organized by AIIMS, Rishikesh held on 15th October, 2018 and won the Yong Researcher award.
- **Swasthya Rakshan Programme** has been executed through 7 CCRS Institutes/Units in 3 states 2 union territories. 12 locations were covered and medical care and awareness about hygiene and health was also provided to the people.
- **Central Council for Research** in Siddha with the support of Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India organised a National Conference on “Global Acceptance for Siddha System of Medicine: Scope and Challenges” which was held on 28th & 29th September, 2018 at AnnaArangam, Community Hall, Shenoy Nagar, Chennai.

Important Days Celebrated

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

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

Year End Review 2018: Ministry of Tribal Affairs

- **Scheduled Tribes Component** across all Ministries witnesses a substantial increase from Rs. 31,920.00 Cr. in the year 2017-18 to Rs. 37,802.94 Cr in 2018-19.
- **Government announces** important measures to revamp and expand scheme of setting up EMRSs; 462 new EMRSs to be set up
- **Launch of Van Dhan Yojana** by Prime Minister to improve income and livelihood for about 5 crore tribal people
- **Two National level** and four state level museums to celebrate contribution of tribal freedom fighters being set up
- **The Ministry of Tribal Affairs** is the nodal Ministry for overall policy, planning and coordination of programmes for development of Scheduled Tribes. The Scheduled Tribes comprise about 8.6% of India's population (according to the 2011 census).
- **In the year 2018**, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs focused on education of tribal people, new initiatives to substantially step up economic empowerment of the tribal population as well as bring into spotlight the tribal culture by constructing museums to highlight the tribal freedom fighters.
- **A very major thrust** this year has been on revamping and overhauling the prominent scheme of setting up of Eklaya Model Residential Schools to expand the reach of good quality education among the tribal persons.

THE SALIENT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE YEAR 2018

- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** has continued with its endeavours for socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes (STs) through specially tailored schemes for education, infrastructure and livelihood to fill in critical gaps. Allocation of Business Rules (ABR) of Government now mandates this Ministry to monitor 'Tribal Sub-Plan' (now recoinced as 'Scheduled Tribe Component') funds of Central Ministries based on the framework and mechanism propounded by NITI Aayog. In order to consistently improve public service delivery, Ministry of Tribal Affairs constantly reviews various schematic initiatives, recent ones being rationalization of scholarship schemes besides on boarding of same on DBT platform and online portal for NGO Grants.
- **Budget allocation of the Ministry** of Tribal Affairs has gone up from Rs. 5329.32 Crore in the year 2017-18 to Rs. 5957.18 Cr in 2018-19. Ministry has already utilized 74.69% of its allocated outlay on various developmental initiatives for STs. An amount of Rs. 2385.90 Cr (as on 09th December, 2018) has been released under two Special Areas Programme of the Ministry viz. Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme and Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution for Education, Health, Livelihood/Income Generation Activities etc. Similarly, allocation for Scheduled Tribes Component across all Ministries has witnessed an increase from Rs. 31,920.00 Cr in the year 2017-18 to Rs. 37,802.94 Cr in 2018-19.
- **With implementation of Public Financial Management System (PFMS)**, efficiency in funds allocation and monitoring its release has been improved besides enhancing transparency and accountability. All agencies receiving funds from the Ministry have been on boarded in the system. This facilitates real-time tracking of fund utilization by implementing agencies.

MONITORING OF FUNDS FOR TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Allocation of Business Rules (ABR)** amended in January, 2017 has mandated the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) for monitoring of STC funds of Central Ministries. An online monitoring system has been put in place by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs with web address <http://stcmis.gov.in> for monitoring of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP)/Schedule Tribe Component (STC) funds. The framework captures data directly from Public Finance Management System (PFMS) and provides inputs to see through expenditure vis-a- vis allocations. Monitoring of physical performance and outcome of initiatives has also been introduced in the system. A customized proforma has also been developed in MIS to capture location of ongoing projects and beneficiary details. Further, Nodal Officer have been designated in line Ministries/Departments for coordination and monitoring. Required credentials are shared with nodal officers for uploading data regarding output and outcome. Review meetings are held regularly for effective monitoring.
- **There are 37 Central Ministries** and Departments having STC funds catering to specific tribal development in various sectors through 299 different schemes, as reflected in the Statement 10B of the Expenditure Profile of the Budget, 2018-19. Allocation for welfare of Scheduled Tribes across all Ministries has witnessed an increase from Rs. 24,005.00 crore in financial year 2016-17 to Rs. 31,920.00 crore in financial year 2017-18 and Rs. 37,802.94 crore in 2018-19. With the efforts of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the STC expenditure has gone up from 85% of total allocation at Revised Estimate stage in 2016-17 to 96% in 2017-18. During 2018-19, out of total allocation of Rs. 37,802.94 crore, an amount of Rs. 23,772.05 crore has already been released as on 09.12.2018, which is 62.88% of the total allocation.
- **As far as State TSP funds** are concerned, vigorous efforts of MoTA has resulted in 98% increase in expenditure of State Tribal Sub-Plan funds by States during the years block of 2010-13 (wherein a total of Rs. 1,65,691.00 crore was expended) to 2014-17 (wherein a total of Rs. 3,27,574.00 crore were expended)."
- **As on 09.12.2018**, 63% of the total allocated STC amount has been released by different Central Ministries / Departments against various development projects relating to education, health, agriculture, irrigation, roads, housing, electrification, employment generation, skill development etc.

SCHEME FOR EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL (EMRS)

- **Eklavya Model Residential School** is an excellent approach for imparting quality education to ST children. Apart from school building including hostels and staff quarters, provision for a playground, students' computer lab, teacher resource room etc. are also included in the EMRSs. The scheme aims to bridge the gap in literacy level between the general population and tribal population.
- **A total of 284 EMRSs** have been sanctioned as on date, out of which 219 have been reported functional, with about 65,231 students enrolled therein.
- **The Cabinet Committee** on Economic Affairs, in its meeting held on 17th December, 2018, has decided that by the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an Eklavya Model Residential School. Eklavya schools will be on par with Navodaya Vidyalayas and will have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.
- **It has also been decided** to set up an Autonomous Society under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs similar to Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti to run the EMRSs.
- **The recurring cost** has also been enhanced from the existing Rs. 61,500/- to Rs. 1,09,000/- per student per year from 2019-20.
- **The CCEA decision** also spells out reservation of 20% seats under sports quota and 10% for non-ST students.
- **Rolling out the proposed scheme** with a financial cost of Rs. 2238.47 Crores during 2018-19 and 2019-20.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- **An outlay of Rs. 118.65 Crore** has been made to various states under the scheme Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS) and Grants under Article 275(1) for skill development of more than 31,000 male and female tribal beneficiaries in a wide gamut of trades such as (i) Planning and Management including office management (ii) Solar Technician / Electrician (iii) Beautician (iv) Handicraft (v) Skills required for day to day construction works

(such as Plumbing, Mason, Electrician, Fitter, Welder, Carpenter (vi) Refrigeration and A/C repairing (vii) Mobile repairing (viii) Nutrition (x) Ayurvedic & tribal medicines (xi) IT (xii) Data Entry (xiii) Fabrication (xiv) Paramedics and Home Nurse Training (xv) Automobile Driving and Mechanics (xvi) Electric & Motor Winding (xvii) Security Guard (xviii) Housekeeping & Management (xix) Retail Management (xx) Hospitality (xxi) Eco-tourism (xxii) Adventure Tourism.

CONSTRUCTION OF MUSEUMS FOR TRIBAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS

- **Government has conceptualized** and planned setting up of permanent museums in States where Tribals lived, struggled against the Britishers, refused to bowdown to alien rule and were far ahead in making sacrifices.
- **Ministry has decided** to construct a state-of-the-art Museums for Tribal Freedom fighters of national importance in Gujarat with a total outlay of Rs. 102.55 crore and MoTA's contribution of Rs. 50.00 crore.
- **The second national level** museum is to come-up in Jharkhand with an outlay of Rs. 36.66 crore and MoTA's contribution of Rs. 25.00 crore.
- **The Ministry** has also shortlisted four other states i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh for construction of State level museums.

ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA) FROM THE PERIOD 31.12.2017 TO 10.12.2018

- **INITIATIVES FOR PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTGS)** i. Ministry has enhanced the allocation of funds for the development of PVTGs from Rs. 240.00 crores in 2017-18 to Rs. 260.00 crores in 2018-19.
- **ii. State Government** have been given the flexibility of utilizing the funds using the gaps identified through Base Line Surveys.
- **iii. In order** to ensure the overall development of PVTGs, emphasis is being given on Micro planning using GIS mapping of tribes.
- **iv. Emphasis** in the Comprehensive cum Development (CCD) approach for preserving traditional architecture, traditional health practices, cuisine besides maintaining the heritage and culture of PVTGs.

SCHOLARSHIPS SCHEMES

- **Pre Matric Scholarship** · Inviting applications Online - States are either using their own portal or National Scholarship Portal (NSP) for obtaining online applications from students.
- **Financial assistance** enhanced from Rs. 265.00 crores in 2017-18 to Rs. 350.00 crore in 2018-19 out of which Rs. 294.58 crore is released to states as on 06.12.2018.

Post Matric Scholarship

- **Inviting applications** Online - States are either using their own portal or NSP portal for obtaining online applications from students.

- **Financial assistance** enhanced from Rs.1347.07 crores to Rs. 1586.00 crores for 2018-19 out of which Rs. 1308.77 crore is released to states as on 06.12.2018.

National fellowship and Scholarship Scheme for higher education of ST students.

- **Financial assistance** in the scheme for 2018-19 is Rs.100.00 crores.
- **Top Class Scholarship scheme** · Inviting applications Online - NSP being used for inviting application from students studying in identified top class institutions. · Tuition fees are being disbursed directly to the Institutes while maintenance allowance to student's individual accounts directly through PFMS. · 87 new institutes added to the scheme during the year 2018.
- **Fellowship Scheme** · Ministry took over implementation of scheme from UGC since 2017-18. · Inviting applications Online - Operationalised NFST portal for inviting fresh applications online and 2302 applications for the year 2018-19 have been received. · Student queries are resolved through coordination with PFMS and Banks. · High priority accorded to persons with Disabilities, PVTGs, BPL and females.
- **National Overseas Scholarship for ST students.** · Portal has been operationalised by the Ministry and hosted on Ministry's NIC Server. · Flexibility introduced for courses of study to be undertaken by Students. · 138 applications have been received for the year 2018-19, which are under process.
- **DBT** · Data is being collected every month and uploaded on DBT Bharat Portal.

VAN DHAN YOJANA

- **The Ministry of Tribal Affairs** has launched a game-changing initiative for tribal people - The Van Dhan Yojana, with the launch of the first Van Dhan Vikas Kendra at Bijapur by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on 14th April, 2018. It aims to provide skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.
- **As per the plan, TRIFED** will facilitate establishment of MFP-led multi-purpose Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, a cluster of 10 SHGs comprising of 30 tribal MFP gatherers each, in the tribal areas. This initiative is aimed at mainstreaming 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%. About 3000 such Van Dhan Kendras are proposed to be set up in two years in the forested Tribal Districts of the country.
- **To begin with**, this initiative is proposed to be taken up on priority in the 39 Districts with more than 50% tribal population and to then gradually be expanded to other Tribal Districts in India. The initiative aims to promote MFPs-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans.
- **MFP or what may be** more aptly referred to as Non Timber Forest Produces (NTFPs) are the primary source of income and livelihood for about 5 crore tribal people in the country.

AADI MAHOTSAV

- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** organized a National Tribal Festival named as 'Aadi Mahotsava' from 16th November, 2018 to 30th November, 2018 with the help of TRIFED to celebrate, cherish and promote the spirit of tribal craft, culture, cuisine and commerce at Delhi Haat, INA. This festival was inaugurated by Sh Jual Oram, Hon'ble Minister of Tribal Affairs.
- **More than 1000 Artisans from 20 States**, 80 Tribal Chefs and 14 Dance Troupes comprising more than 250 Artists participated in the Mahotsav. Highlights of the Mahotsav were – Live demos for traditional tribal food and drink; Lac bangles; demo for 4 different schools of painting i.e. Warli, Pithora, Gond and Saura; Fashion show for tribal textiles, fashion accessories etc. Tribal products displayed at Mahotsav included heritage collection of Sarees, Men's collection including

cotton, woollen and silk Jackets, Kurtas from MP, Rajasthan and Jharkhand; Bell Metal from Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh; Paintings from Gujrat, Maharashtra, Odisha and MP; Woollens from HP, Uttaranchal and J&K; Honey, spices dry fruits etc. from different States; Tribal Jewellery from Himachal, Odisha, North-East, MP, Telangana; Pottery from Manipur, Rajasthan; Home Furnishing from Rajasthan, North East, MP, UP; Bags collection from Gujrat, Telangana, Jharkhand; and Grass Mat and Coir collection from West Bengal, Jharkhand and Kerala.

- **At the closing ceremony** of the National Tribal Festival, Hon'ble Tribal Affairs Minister Shri Jual Oram felicitated tribal sportswoman - Ms. Mary Kom, for her extraordinary achievement of 6th time Women's World Boxing Champion at Dilli Haat on 30th November, 2018, who is also Brand Ambassador for TRIBES India (Punchtantra range of products) .
- **It has also been proposed** that National Tribal Festivals shall be conducted in 17 States/ Union territories up to March, 2019 to provide a broad platform to highlight tribal culture across India.

NGO GRANTS

- **Implementation of Online application** system "NGO Grants Online Application & Tracking System" (www.ngograntsmota.gov.in) activated for processing NGO proposals under the scheme of "Grant-in-aid to Voluntary Organizations working for welfare of Scheduled Tribes" has resulted in quicker information flow and smoother implementation of the scheme besides increasing the number of applications.
- **MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE FOR MINOR FOREST PRODUCE** The scheme for 'Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of Value Chain for MFP" (known as MSP for MFP in short) was launched in the year 2013-14 and it then covered only ten MFP items and was applicable to the Schedule V States only. Subsequently, in October 2016 the extent and coverage of the scheme was increased by adding more MFP items and also rendering the scheme applicable country wide. The MSP of ten items that were originally incorporated into the scheme were further revised in November 2017. The issues of further expanding the list of MFP items as also further revising the MSP of the existing MFP items are being considered by the Ministry.



National Tribal Festival/Carnival Organised by Ministry of Tribal Affairs

- **National Tribal festival/carnival** has been organized as an annual feature by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) since the year 2015 as detailed below. This serves to showcase the glimpses of rich cultural heritage of tribal people across the country through unique forms of folk dances, songs, cuisine, exhibition and demonstration of traditional skill in painting, art and craft, medicinal practices:
- **The Ministry of Tribal Affairs** introduced a new concept of organising National Tribal Festival titled "Aadi Mahotsav" in collaboration with Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) from 2017-18 onwards. During Aadi Mahotsav 2017, a total business of Rs. 500 Lakh was transacted by tribal artisans comprising of direct sale of Rs.442 Lakh made by tribal artisans and Rs.60 Lakhs worth inventory sourced by TRIFED. The Festival showed exquisite craftsmanship of tribal artisans. Almost 800 Artisans and Artists from 27 States participated in the Mahotsav and sold their products and displayed their crafts and skill through more than 200 stalls that was set up for them. Stage programmes of tribal dances and folk songs were conducted daily. 85 Tribal Chefs from 25 States showcased tribal delicacies.
- **For the Aadi Mahotsav** - 2018 held from November 16-30, more than 430 tribal artisans and artists from more than 20 States participated and displayed/sold their various handicraft and handloom products through 159 stalls set for the purpose and realised a direct sale of Rs.305 Lakh. Besides, TRIFED also placed purchase order to the tune of Rs.1280 Lakhs on the artisans/suppliers. 76 tribal chefs from different States also presented various tribal delicacies. 14 dance troupes comprising of more than 200 artists who presented exquisite tribal folk performances in the evenings. World class cultural programme included internationally acclaimed group like Siddhi Dhamal from Gujarat, Chau folk dance from Jharkhand, Manipuri tribal dances, dance troupe from Leh and Ladakh, Rajasthan Folk singers.
- **The Ministry as a step forward** in this direction to highlight rich tribal culture across the country has also embarked upon an ambitious programme to hold similar events in States and Union Territories too through TRIFED.
- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs has helped** States establish Tribal Research Institutes. Core responsibility of TRIs is to function as a body of knowledge & research, for tribal development and preservation of art and culture of tribal people. The TRIs comprise of cultural museum, library, training centre, research wing etc.
- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)** provides funds to State Governments under the Scheme 'Support to Tribal Research Institute (TRI)' for the functioning of TRIs. The annual outlay of the Scheme has been enhanced from Rs. 21.00 crore in 2016-17 to Rs. 80.00 crore in 2017-18 and Rs. 100.00 crore in 2018-19.
- **TRIs have carry out various activities** viz. research studies, evaluation studies, organization of training/seminar/workshop, organization of tribal festivals, baseline survey, publications, documentaries / documentation, organization of exchange visits etc. over the years.
- **The Ministry has also developed a digital repository** with web address <http://tribal.nic.in/repository> where documents, folks songs, photos/videos regarding their evolution, place of origin, lifestyle, eating habits, architecture, education level, traditional art, folk dances and other anthropological details of the tribes in India are stored. The repository currently has more than 10,000 photographs, videos and publications which are mostly done by TRIs.

Export of Organic Products

- **Ministry of Commerce & Industry** has implemented the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) since 2001 with the following objectives:
- **To provide the means of evaluation** of certification programme for organic agriculture and products (including wild harvest, aquaculture, livestock products) as per the approved criteria. To accredit certification programmes of Certification Bodies seeking accreditation.
- **To facilitate certification** of organic products in conformity with the prescribed standards.
- **To facilitate certification** of organic products in conformity with the importing countries organic standards as per equivalence agreement between the two countries or as per importing country requirements. To encourage the development of organic farming and organic processing.
- **Currently, 29 Certification Bodies** are accredited for carrying out inspection and certification for process certification of organic products for exports from the country.

- **The promotion of exports of organic products** is a continuous process. The newly introduced Agriculture Export Policy provides an assurance that no restrictions will be placed on export of organic products. The Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), an autonomous organisation under the administrative control of Department of Commerce, has been mandated with the export promotion of organic products. APEDA provides assistance to the exporters of organic products under various components of its export promotion scheme.

Polar vortex

- **In this decade, the polar vortex** has also been blamed on extremely cold weather in the United States in 2014 and the infamous 'Beast from the East', the blast of cold weather that blew from Siberia towards western Europe and the UK in February and March of 2018.
- **What exactly is a polar vortex?** It is described as a whirling cone of low pressure over the poles that is strongest in the winter months due to the increased temperature contrast between the polar regions and the mid-latitudes, such as the US and Europe.
- **The polar vortex** spins in the stratosphere, a layer of the atmosphere 10-48 km above the ground and above the troposphere, where most familiar weather patterns develop.
- **Usually, when the vortex** is strongest, cold air is less-likely to plunge deep into North America or Europe. In other words, it forms a wall that protects the mid-latitudes from cold Arctic air.
- **But occasionally, the polar vortex** is disrupted and weakens, due to wave energy propagating upward from the lower atmosphere. When this happens, the stratosphere warms sharply in an event known as sudden stratospheric warming, in just a few days, miles above the Earth's surface.
- **The warming weakens the polar vortex**, shifting its location somewhat south of the pole or, in some instances, 'splitting' the vortex up into 'sister vortices'.
- **Effects:** The split higher up in the atmosphere can give rise to both, sudden and delayed effects, much of which involves declining temperatures and extreme winter weather in the eastern US along with northern and western Europe.
- **A sudden stratospheric** warming also leads to a warm Arctic not only in the stratosphere but also in the troposphere as well. A warmer Arctic, in turn, favours more severe winter weather in the Northern Hemisphere mid-latitudes including the eastern US.

Legal status for SSC

- **Background:** The SSC was created to ease the burden of the UPSC by taking over the recruitment for posts below the Group 'A' level. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and all State Public Service Commissions either have constitutional or legal status. The SSC is the only such organisation that performs similar functions on a much larger scale, but does not enjoy statutory status.
- **At present**, the SSC has a sanctioned staff strength of 481 officers but is functioning with 75% of its sanctioned strength.
- **Need for a statutory status:** There has been a phenomenal increase in the workload of the SSC, from 9.94 lakh candidates in 2008-09 to over 2 crore in 2016-17.
- **While the workload and responsibilities** of the SSC have increased exponentially over the years, it has remained an "attached body" under the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), and has to depend entirely on the government for all its needs, with no autonomy.
- **According statutory status** to the SSC would contribute to greater functional autonomy, faster decision-making and efficiency in the overall performance and delivery of results by the SSC in the recruitment process.

Govt declares 'one-time financial assistance' for Rare diseases

- **What is a rare disease?** A rare disease, also referred to as an orphan disease, is any disease that affects a small percentage of the population.
- **Most rare diseases** are genetic, and are present throughout a person's entire life, even if symptoms do not immediately appear. In Europe a disease or disorder is defined as rare when it affects less than 1 in 2000 citizens.
- **Rare diseases** are characterised by a wide diversity of symptoms and signs that vary not only from disease to disease but also from patient to patient suffering from the same disease. Relatively common symptoms can hide underlying rare diseases, leading to misdiagnosis.
- **The most common** rare diseases recorded in India are Haemophilia, Thalassemia, sickle-cell anaemia and primary immuno deficiency in children, auto-immune diseases, Lysosomal storage disorders such as Pompe disease, Hirschsprung disease, Gaucher's disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Hemangiomas and certain forms of muscular dystrophies.
- **Need of nationwide policy:** State has responsibility for providing affordable, accessible and reliable health-care services to every citizen. In fact constitution also mentions importance of health-care services under articles like 21, 38 and 47 and thus state cannot evade this responsibility under the pretext of non-justifiability of articles.
- **Given the low volumes** at which the drugs needed to treat such diseases would be consumed, pharmaceutical companies have little commercial incentive to produce them. Thus, a nationwide policy on orphan drugs could incentivize these players.
- **Even if pharmaceutical** companies are incentivized to develop drugs to treat rare diseases, pharmaceutical companies remain beholden to the laws of economics and, given the low demand for orphan drugs, price these drugs as high as they choose to. Hence there has to be regulation of the government in restricting the exorbitant prices of the drugs.
- **Although proportion** of rare diseases is much less than the other diseases, it does not reduce the importance of the life of person affected by rare diseases. Thus national policy would remove this adverse distinction and would make government committed equally to all people.

Fugitive Economic Offender

- **Implications:** The investigative agency can now confiscate properties of Mallya which are not directly related to the cases against him.
- **Background:** The decision comes against an application by the Enforcement Directorate before the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court to classify Mallya as a fugitive economic offender.
- **Definition- Fugitive Economic Offender:** The fugitive economic offenders' law came into force in August last year. A person can be named an offender under this law if there is an arrest warrant against him or her for involvement in economic offences involving at least Rs. 100 crore or more and has fled from India to escape legal action.
- **The procedure:** The investigating agencies have to file an application in a Special Court under the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act, 2002 containing details of the properties to be confiscated, and any information about the person's whereabouts.
- **The Special Court** will issue a notice for the person to appear at a specified place and date at least six weeks from the issue of notice. Proceedings will be terminated if the person appears. If not the person would be declared as a Fugitive Economic Offender based on the evidence filed by the investigating agencies.
- **The person** who is declared as a Fugitive Economic Offender can challenge the proclamation in the High Court within 30 days of such declaration according to the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.

The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill, 2018

- **Key features of the Bill include:** New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC): The Bill seeks to provide for the establishment of the NDIAC to conduct arbitration, mediation, and conciliation proceedings. The Bill declares the NDIAC as an institution of national importance.

- **International Centre** for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICADR): The ICADR is a registered society to promote the resolution of disputes through alternative dispute resolution methods (such as arbitration and mediation). The Bill seeks to transfer the existing ICADR to the central government.
- **Composition:** Under the Bill, the NDIAC will consist of seven members including: (i) a Chairperson who may be a Judge of the Supreme Court or a High Court, or an eminent person with special knowledge and experience in the conduct or administration of arbitration; (ii) two eminent persons having substantial knowledge and experience in institutional arbitration; (iii) three ex-officio members, including a nominee from the Ministry of Finance and a Chief Executive Officer (responsible for the day-to-day administration of the NDIAC); and (iv) a representative from a recognised body of commerce and industry, appointed as a part-time member, on a rotational basis.
- **Term and superannuation:** The members of NDIAC will hold office for three years and will be eligible for re-appointment. The retirement age for the Chairperson is 70 years and other members is 67 years.
- **Objectives and functions of the NDIAC:** The key objectives of the NDIAC include (i) promoting research, providing training and organising conferences and seminars in alternative dispute resolution matters; (ii) providing facilities and administrative assistance for the conduct of arbitration, mediation and conciliation proceedings; (iii) maintaining a panel of accredited professionals to conduct arbitration, mediation and conciliation proceedings. Key functions of the NDIAC will include: (i) facilitating conduct of arbitration and conciliation in a professional, timely and cost-effective manner; and (ii) promoting studies in the field of alternative dispute resolution.
- **Finance and audit:** The NDIAC will be required to maintain a fund which will be credited with grants received from the central government, fees collected for its activities, and other sources. The accounts of the NDIAC will be audited and certified by the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India.
- **Institutional support:** The Bill specifies that the NDIAC will establish a Chamber of Arbitration which will maintain a permanent panel of arbitrators. Further, the NDIAC may also establish an Arbitration Academy for training arbitrators and conducting research in the area of alternative dispute resolution. The NDIAC may also constitute other committees to administer its functions.
- **What is Arbitration?** Arbitration is a settlement of dispute between two parties to a contract by a neutral third party i.e. the arbitrator without resorting to court action. The process can be tailored to suit parties' particular needs.
- **Arbitrators** can be chosen for their expertise. It is confidential and can be speedier and cheaper than court. There are limited grounds of appeal. Arbitral awards are binding and enforceable through courts.
- **Significance of ADR:** It is felt that a reliable and responsive alternative dispute resolution system is essential for rapidly developing countries like India. While business disputes need speedy resolution, litigation is the least favoured method for that. The Indian judicial system is marred by delays because of which businesses suffer as disputes are not resolved in a reasonable time period. Therefore, need for alternative dispute resolution processes like negotiation, mediation conciliation and arbitration is felt from time to time.

Polavaram project

- **Andhra Pradesh** received the award in the category of "Best Implementation of Water Resources Project" for better planning, implementation and monitoring.
- **About the Polavaram project:** Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project. The dam across the Godavari River is under construction located in West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh state and its reservoir spreads in parts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa States also.
- **The project is multipurpose major** terminal reservoir project on river Godavari for development of Irrigation, Hydropower and drinking water facilities to East Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, West Godavari and Krishna districts of Andhra Pradesh. The Polavaram project was accorded national status in 2014 in the Andhra Pradesh Bifurcation Act and its design was changed.
- **About CBIP:** The Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP), is a Premier Institution set up by the Government of India in the 1927. CBIP has been rendering dedicated services to the professional organizations, engineers and individuals in the country related to Power, Water Resources and Renewable Energy Sectors for more than eight decades.
- **OBJECTIVES:** Dissemination of technical knowledge and information through various modes, e.g., publication of journals, manuals, technical reports, guidelines, organizing seminars and conferences and recognition of technical excellence through bestowing awards.
- **To provide** training to the engineers/professionals. To provide consultancy services. To provide research and professional excellence. To provide linkages to Indian Engineers, Managers and Scientists with their counterparts in other countries and with international organizations.
- **To establish** a Technical database, technological developments and to provide information services to the professionals. Introduction of Latest Technologies.

Cyclone Pabuk

- **Four Stage Warning:** The cyclone warnings are issued to state government officials in four stages.
- **The First Stage** warning known as "PRE CYCLONE WATCH" issued 72 hours in advance contains early warning about the development of a cyclonic disturbance in the north Indian Ocean, its likely intensification into a tropical cyclone and the coastal belt likely to experience adverse weather. This early warning bulletin is issued by the Director General of Meteorology himself and is addressed to the Cabinet Secretary and other senior officers of the Government of India including the Chief Secretaries of concerned maritime states.
- **The Second Stage** warning known as "CYCLONE ALERT" is issued at least 48 hrs. in advance of the expected commencement of adverse weather over the coastal areas. It contains information on the location and intensity of the storm likely direction of its movement, intensification, coastal districts likely to experience adverse weather and advice to fishermen, general public, media and disaster managers. This is issued by the concerned ACWCs/CWCs and CWD at HQ.
- **The Third Stage** warning known as "CYCLONE WARNING" issued at least 24 hours in advance of the expected commencement of adverse weather over the coastal areas. Landfall point is forecast at this stage. These warnings are issued by ACWCs/CWCs/and CWD at HQ at 3 hourly interval giving the latest position of cyclone and its intensity, likely point and time of landfall, associated heavy rainfall, strong wind and storm surge along with their impact and advice to general public, media, fishermen and disaster managers.
- **The Fourth Stage** of warning known as "POST LANDFALL OUTLOOK" is issued by the concerned ACWCs/CWCs/and CWD at HQ at least 12 hours in advance of expected time of landfall. It gives likely direction of movement of the cyclone after its landfall and adverse weather likely to be experienced in the interior areas.
- **Different colour codes** as mentioned below are being used since post monsoon season of 2006 the different stages of the cyclone warning bulletins as desired by the National Disaster Management.
- **Cyclone Alert- Yellow.** Cyclone Warning- Orange. Post landfall outlook- Red.

Asia Competitiveness Institute's (ACI) EDB index:

- **Context:** Asia Competitiveness Institute's (ACI) has released its Ease of Doing Business Index on Attractiveness to Investors, Business Friendliness and Competitive Policies (EDB Index ABC).
- **Performance** of Indian states: Andhra Pradesh has topped the list. It is followed by Maharashtra and Delhi.
- **Asia Competitiveness** Institute at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore was established as a research centre in 2006 with an aim to build intellectual leadership and network for understanding and developing competitiveness in the Asia region.

World Braille Day- January 4th:

- **Context:** The United Nations observed the first official World Braille Day on 4th January to create awareness about the importance of Braille.
- **Why January 4th?** World Braille Day is celebrated on the January 4th to honour Louis Braille, who is credited for inventing the Braille script. Louis Braille was born in France on 4 January 1809.
- **What is Braille?** Braille is a tactile writing system used by people who are visually impaired. It is traditionally written with embossed paper.
- **Braille invention** allows visually impaired individuals to lead an independent life through learning and understanding of the Braille codes. Initially, the code was devised in 1821 by Louis Braille, for the provision of accessibility in learning skills, gaining equal opportunities, achieving goals, managing security and creating various opportunities for intellectual thinkers.

Mandal Dam project:

- **Context:** Mandal Dam is being built on the North Koel River.
- **About the Mandal Dam Project:** The Mandal Dam project will help around one lakh eleven thousand hectares of agricultural land in Jharkhand and Bihar to get irrigation facilities.
- **Funding:** 60% of the project cost would be financed by the central government as a grant from Long-Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF) under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY). Remaining 40% will be borne by the States through loan financed by NABARD.
- **North Koel River:** North Koel River originates on Ranchi plateau in Jharkhand and joins the Sone River, a few miles north-west of Haidarnagar in Jharkhand. The river meanders through the northern part of Betla National Park. The principal tributaries of the North Koel River are Auranga and the Amanat.



Year End Review 2018: Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers

- (D/o Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Fertilizers and Pharmaceuticals)
- **DEPARTMENT OF FERTILIZERS (DoF)** 1. Neem Coating of Urea · Neem Coating achieved w.e.f.: - ü 1st September, 2015 in respect of entire quantity of indigenously produced urea and w.e.f. ü 1st December, 2015 in respect of imported 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.

Introduction of 45 kg bag of urea: -

- **On 1st March, 2018**, DAC&FW has notified the MRP of 45 kg bag of urea at Rs 242 per bag and a period of two months from the date of DAC&FW gazette notification given to urea units as lead time to ensure smooth implementation of the policy.
- **DAC&FW** has been requested to conduct a study regarding the impact of introduction of 45 kg bag on urea sales during the ongoing Kharif Season as well as the upcoming Rabi Season.

Dealer/Distribution Margin: -

- **From 28th March, 2018** DoF revised Dealer's Margin from Rs.180/200 per MT of Urea (for Private Agencies/Institutional Agencies) to Rs.354 per MT of Urea.
- **Rs 354/MT** being paid uniformly to all Dealers/Distributors effective from 1st April, 2018, on the quantity sold through POS devices only.
- **Benefits of increasing dealer margin:** - ü Enhance the financial viability of Dealers/Distributors post DBT implementation. ü Around 23,000 Dealers across the country benefitted.

New Urea Policy – 2015

- **Effective** from 1st June 2015.

- **Objectives:** - ù to maximize indigenous urea production; ù to promote energy efficiency in the urea units; and ù 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).

Amendment to NUP – 2015: Target Energy Norms

- **DoF, on 28th March, 2018**, notified the following in respect of Target Energy Norms:
- **ù In respect** of 11 urea manufacturing units, target energy norms have come into force w.e.f. 1st April, 2018. ù 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.

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.

Revival of Barauni, Sindri, Gorakhpur, Talcher & Ramagundam units

- **(a) Gorakhpur, Sindri and Barauni units of FCIL** being revived through nominate route by forming a JV of nominated PSUs by setting up gas based new ammonia-urea fertilizer plants of 1.27 MMTPA capacity each. · A JV company by name Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Limited (HURL) formed with shareholding of 29.67% of NTPC, IOCL & CIL each and 10.99% of FCIL/HFCL
- **The pre-project activities completed in respect of all the three projects.** · Environmental clearance obtained. · Gas supply & transportation agreement signed with GAIL (India). · Lump sum turnkey (LSTK) contracts for the 3 plants have been awarded.
- **State Governments** of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar & Jharkhand waived off stamp duty with respect to Gorakhpur, Barauni & Sindri projects respectively. · Gol approved interest free loan equivalent to interest during construction component of Rs 422.28 crore, 415.77 crore and 419.77 crore for Gorakhpur, Sindri and Barauni projects respectively to HURL's at a total value of Rs. 1257.82 crores. The repayment to be spread over a period of 11 years.
- **Construction works** have begun in all three projects, which are progressing as per the overall schedule. · These projects are likely to start production in FY 2021-22.
- **(b) Talcher unit of FCIL** in Odisha being revived through 'Nomination Basis' by forming JV of nominated PSUs. · JV company named as Talcher Fertilizers Ltd. (TFL). Equity of GAIL, RCF & CIL in TFL is 29.67% each & FCIL's 10.99%. · New Ammonia Urea plant of 1.27 MMTPA capacity based on Coal Gasification Technology being set up · MoU with IOCL for supply of petcoke from Paradip refinery signed.
- **Power Price Parity for Bridge Linkage Coal approved by Ministry of Coal.** · Captive coal mine allotted. · Environment Clearance for the project received. · Financial appraisal of project DFR done. · Site preparation work commenced. · Bids for coal gasification and ammonia-urea project opened. · The Talcher Project likely to start production in FY 2022-23.

- **(c) Ramagundam unit of FCIL being revived through nomination route by forming JV of nominated PSUs** · JV company named as Ramagundam Fertilizers & Chemicals Ltd. (RFCL) has been formed. · Equity of NFL & EIL is 26% each and FCIL's 11%. · RFCL being revived by setting up a gas based fertilizer plant of 1.27 MMTPA capacity.
- **Contract for laying of Gas pipe line awarded to GSPL India Transco Ltd (GITL), a subsidiary of Gujarat State Petronet Ltd (GSPL)**. · Gas Supply agreement signed with GAIL. · Water & Power connectivity being executed by State Govt. at their expense.
- **Cumulative progress of RFCL project as on 30.11.2018 is 92.6%** · The project is targeted to be commissioned by FY 2019-20.

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.

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.

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.

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 M/oHRD.

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.
- **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 MMTA 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.

Assam Gas Cracker Project - Brahmaputra Cracker & Polymer Limited (BCPL)

- **The Project** dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister of India on 5th February 2016. The Plant is operating at more than 100% capacity continuously in the current financial year.
- **The project** has capacity to produce 2.20 lakh tonne per annum (TPA) of High Density Polyethylene (HDPE)/Linear Low Density Polyethylene and 60,000 TPA Polypropylene (PP).

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.

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.

Hindustan Organic Chemicals Limited (HOCL)

- **Status of implementation** of the restructuring plan of HOCL (as on 30.11.2018) is as follows:
- **All plants of Rasayani** unit except N2O4 plant have been closed down. ü N2O4 plant has been transferred to ISRO along with 20 acres land and 131 employees associated with the plant. ü Out of 442 acres land at Rasayani to be sold to BPCL, sale transaction for 251 acres have been completed. Sale of remaining 191 acres will be done after land survey report is cleared by the State Government.
- **Approval of the Government** for sale of additional 242 acres (+/- 10%) land at Rasayani to BPCL and for lease transfer of 1000 sq m land at Kharghar, Navi Mumbai, to NALCO has been accorded on 09.10.2018. ü For disposal of the remaining unencumbered land at Rasayani (approx. 258 acres) and Panvel land (8 acres), negotiations are underway with Govt. agencies like BPCL and MIDC.
- **All the 10 Nestle flats (Mumbai)**, closed down plants and utility blocks have CPC 10 been successfully e-auctioned through MSTC. ü All the non-regular employees and about 313 regular employees of Rasayani unit have been separated through VRS/VSS. ü Liability relating to redemption of Govt. guaranteed bonds of Rs.250 crore has been fully settled by HOCL from the Gol bridge loan.
- **After implementation** of the restructuring plan, the Phenol/Acetone plant at Kochi unit resumed regular operations from July, 2017 and has been operating regularly since then with positive contribution. This has enabled HOCL to earn net profit of about Rs.24 crore (Prov.) from Kochi unit operations during the current FY 2018-19 (up to September, 2018).

India Chem- 2018

- **The 10th edition** of India Chem 2018 was successfully held during 04th-06th October, 2018 at Mumbai with the theme "Chemicals and Petrochemicals – Advantage India".
- **Participation from 24 countries.** ü Partner States: West Bengal, Gujarat, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. ü States Participation: Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. ü 285 exhibiting companies.
- **Concurrent events held as part of India Chem 2018** ü Global CEOs Round Table ü Conclave with Overseas Industry Associations coinciding India Chem 2018 organized by Indian Chemical Council ü INDIA-JAPAN Chemicals & Petrochemicals forum, supported by Japan External Trade organization (JETRO)
- **INDIA-GERMANY** Chemicals & Petrochemicals forum, supported by Indo-German Chamber of Commerce ü FICCI Chemicals & Petrochemicals Awards Distribution Function
- **Buyer Seller Meet by CHEMEXCIL** ü Conclave on Indian Petrochemical Industry ü Conclave on Agrochemical Industry"

BIS Standard for Caustic Soda

- **In order** to make revised quality standards BIS standards IS 252:2013 for Caustic Soda mandatory for both domestic makers and imports, this DoCPC has notified the order of mandation of BIS standards IS 252:2013 for caustic soda, to reduce the consumption of inferior grade caustic soda having mercury impurity.

Section 66A of the IT Act

- **Background:** Section 66A had been dubbed as “draconian” for it allowed the arrest of several innocent persons, igniting a public outcry for its scrapping. This had led to the Supreme Court striking it down as unconstitutional in March, 2015 in *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India*.
- **Why SC struck down section 66A?** The SC had noted that Section 66A arbitrarily, excessively and disproportionately invades the right of free speech, under article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution, and upsets the balance between such right and the reasonable restrictions that may be imposed on such right and the definition of offences under the provision was open-ended and undefined.
- **The court** also said that the provision, introduced in 2009 to the original Act of 2000, used expressions “completely open-ended and undefined” and every expression used was “nebulous” in meaning. “What may be offensive to one may not be offensive to another. What may cause annoyance or inconvenience to one may not cause annoyance or inconvenience to another. Even the expression ‘persistently’ is completely imprecise.
- **What is Section 66A all about?** Section 66A defines the punishment for sending “offensive” messages through a computer or any other communication device like a mobile phone or a tablet. A conviction can fetch a maximum of three years in jail and a fine.

10% reservation for economically weak among upper caste

- **The bill** is designed to amend the Constitution to extend 10% reservation in direct recruitment in government jobs and for admission in higher educational institutions to “economically weaker” sections among all castes and communities, Christians and Muslims included, who are not eligible under the existing quotas.
- **The proposed amendment Bill will define Economically Weaker Section (EWS) as one having:** Annual household income below Rs 8 lakh. Agriculture land below 5 acres. Residential house below 1000 sqft. Residential plot below 100 yards in notified municipality. Residential plot below 200 yards in non-notified municipality area.
- **What would it take for the quota to become reality?** It will need an amendment of Articles 15 (prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth) and 16 (equality of opportunity in matters of public employment) of the Constitution. The amendment will have to be ratified in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, by at least two thirds of members present and voting, and by the legislatures of not less than half the states.
- **Implications:** The 10% reservation will be in addition to the existing cap of 50% reservation for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes, taking total reservation to 60%. The quota targets the poor among the upper castes. This will be over and above 50% mandated by Constitution and hence the need for Constitution amendment Bill.
- **Supreme Court in Indira Sawhney case:** The proposed law would face roadblocks if challenged in the Supreme Court. A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in the *Indira Sawhney* case of 1992 specifically answered the question “whether backward classes can be identified only and exclusively with reference to the economic criterion.”
- **The constitution bench** had categorically ruled that a backward class cannot be determined only and exclusively with reference to economic criterion. The bench had held that economic criterion may be a consideration or basis along with, and in addition to, social backwardness, but it can never be the sole criterion.
- **The bench in its judgement** declared 50% quota as the rule unless extraordinary situations “inherent in the great diversity of this country and the people” happen. Even then, the court stated that extreme caution is to be exercised and a special case should be made out.

Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- **Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018:** Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018, seeks to end the discrimination against leprosy persons in various central laws: the Divorce Act, 1869; the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939; the Special Marriage Act, 1954 etc.
- **The Bill eliminates leprosy as a ground for dissolution of marriage or divorce.** The condition under Section 18 (2) (c) of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, that a Hindu wife is entitled to live separately from her husband without forfeiting her claim to maintenance if the latter is suffering from a virulent form of leprosy has been omitted. The amendments introduced in the Bill omit the provisions which stigmatise and discriminate against leprosy-affected persons.

- **Significance of the Bill:** The Bill is meant to provide for the integration of leprosy patients into the mainstream. It is in keeping with the UN General Assembly Resolution of 2010 on the 'Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members'. The proposed law follows a National Human Rights Commission recommendation a decade ago to introduce amendments in personal laws and other statutes.
- **Background:** Leprosy is one of the world's oldest diseases with India accounting for over 60% of the annual new cases of leprosy. Official data says that the number of new Leprosy cases detected during 2016-17 is around 140000 and the prevalence Rate per 10000 population as on March 2017 for India is 0.66, it is established that the number underestimates the real Leprosy burden. In 2017, India along with Brazil and Indonesia are the only countries where more than 10000 new cases are reported per year.
- **What necessitated this?** 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. So there is a need for a separate bill.
- **Government Initiatives in Recently:** The Government has announced the three-pronged strategy for early detection of leprosy cases in the community. It was introduced in 2016 under the National Health Mission, especially in the hard-to-reach areas. A special Leprosy Case Detection Campaign was carried out in 2016. As a result, more than 32000 cases were confirmed and were put on treatment.
- **Supreme Court Ruling:** The Supreme Court has asked the Centre, states and Union Territories to undertake a campaign to spread awareness about the curability of leprosy so that those suffering from it are not discriminated. It recommended for repealing archaic provisions from 119 statutes that stigmatise leprosy patients. No government hospital shall decline treatment to leprosy patients. People suffering from leprosy also have the right to live with human dignity.
- **What is leprosy?** Leprosy is one of the oldest diseases in recorded history. Also, known as Hansen's disease (HD), it is a chronic, progressive bacterial infection caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*.
- **It primarily** affects the nerves of the extremities, the skin, the lining of the nose, the upper respiratory tract and the eyes. The disease produces skin ulcers, nerve damage, and muscle weakness. If it isn't treated, it can cause severe disfigurement and significant disability.
- **It is known** to occur at all ages ranging from early infancy to very old age. It is common in many countries, especially those with a tropical or subtropical climate.

70 Point Grading Index to assess states on schooling system

- **About the Performance Grading Index (PGI):** Aim: The index is aimed at helping states understand where they may be lagging behind and prioritise areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level.
- **The union Human Resource Development (HRD)** ministry is compiling this schooling index. The Index will assess states on a 1,000 point grading system with 10-20 points per parameter.
- **Areas:** The 70 indicators will grade state schooling systems on areas like number of existing teacher vacancies, number of direct entry recruitments especially at leadership positions, school infrastructure and so on. The Niti Aayog which was earlier developing its own School Education Quality Index, will be using 33 of the 70 criteria under the PGI for their own assessments.
- **Significance:** The move is in keeping with the government's overall thrust on quality improvement, teacher training and learning outputs. It will prioritize areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level.

National Policy on Domestic Workers

- **There is a need for the policy due to the following reasons:** Employer-dominated, domestic work industry is characterised by low, stagnant wage rates. Wages are particularly low for Bengali and Adivasi workers. Irregular payment of wages by employer. Extraction of more work than agreed upon at the start of employment. Practice of arbitrarily reducing wages. Private power of regulation enjoyed by the employer.
- **Private nature** of regulation has allowed the employer to exercise quasi-magisterial powers over the domestic worker in India. Workers' attempts to renegotiate their terms of work or to leave such employment are outbid by verbal, and often, physical assaults by employers. Domestic workers are on an almost absolute risk of unemployment or criminalisation when they try to obtain their dues.

- **Proposed national policy for domestic workers:** Its aim is to protect the domestic workers from abuse, harassment, violence and guarantee them rights in the matter of social security and minimum wages. The policy also includes social security cover and provisions against sexual harassment and bonded labour.
- **It is a national policy** for all kinds of household helps, under which payment of wages will be made to the board under fixed slab rates and the central board/trust will be managed by all stakeholders. The policy intends to set up an institutional mechanism to social security cover, fair terms of employment, grievance redressal and dispute resolution. It provides for recognising domestic workers as a worker with the right to register themselves with state labour department or any other suitable mechanism.
- **The policy** will also promote the rights for them to organise and form their own unions/associations and affiliate with other unions/associations. It will also provide for model contract of employment with well-defined period of work and rest.
- **It also aims** to regulate the recruitment and placement agencies by respective governments through formulation of a policy. It will also have a tripartite implementation committee at centre, state and district levels. It will also clearly define various terms such as part time workers, full time workers, live in workers, employers and private placement agencies.

CITES — Washington Convention

- **The species** is currently part of Appendix II of CITES that has species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival. But, India doesn't want that for rosewood.
- **Why India wants rosewood removed from the list?** The species grows at a very fast rate and has the capacity to become naturalised outside its native range, even it is invasive in some parts of the world. The regulation of trade in the species is not necessary to avoid it becoming eligible for inclusion in Appendix I in the near future and the harvest of specimens from the wild is not reducing the wild population to a level at which its survival might be threatened by continued harvesting or other influences.
- **About Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):** It is an International agreement to regulate worldwide commercial trade in wild animal and plant species. It also restricts trade in items made from such plants and animals, such as food, clothing, medicine, and souvenirs. It was signed on March 3, 1973 (Hence world wildlife day is celebrated on march).
- **It is administered** by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Secretariat — Geneva (Switzerland). CITES is legally binding on state parties to the convention, which are obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation to implement its goals.
- **Classifications:** It classifies plants and animals according to three categories, or appendices, based on how threatened. They are. Appendix I: It lists species that are in danger of extinction. It prohibits commercial trade of these plants and animals except in extraordinary situations for scientific or educational reasons.
- **Appendix II species:** They are those that are not threatened with extinction but that might suffer a serious decline in number if trade is not restricted. Their trade is regulated by permit.
- **Appendix III species:** They are protected in at least one country that is a CITES member states and that has petitioned others for help in controlling international trade in that species.



Women and Child Development Ministry launches “Web- Wonder Women” Campaign

- **The Ministry of Women and Child Development**, Government of India, has launched an online campaign, '#www : Web- WonderWomen'. The Campaign aims to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women, who have been driving positive agenda of social change via social media. Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development; Mr. Colin Crowell, Global Head, Public Policy, Twitter; and Ms. Sohini Bhattacharya, President & CEO, Breakthrough, were present during the launch.
- **Through the campaign**, the Ministry and the Campaign's Partners aim to recognize the fortitude of Indian women stalwarts from across the globe who have used the power of social media to run positive & niche campaigns to steer a change in society. This Campaign will recognize and acknowledge the efforts of these meritorious Women.
- **At the launch**, Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development, said, "Indian women have always been enterprising and have created a positive impact on society with their hard-work, experience and knowledge. Women online, though niche, are a very powerful voice. #www: WebWonderWomen is a campaign to specially honour and encourage such voices that have in their own capacity driven a positive impact on social media platforms. The Ministry is glad to partner with Breakthrough and Twitter India on this."
- **The Campaign** invites Entries via Nominations from across the world, as per the laid out criteria. Nominations are now open till 31st January, 2019. Indian-origin women, working or settled anywhere in the world, are eligible for nomination. The shortlisted entries will be open for public voting on Twitter and the finalists will be selected by a specialized panel of judges. Nominations have been invited in a large number of categories including Health, Media, Literature, Art, Sports, Environmental protection, fashion among others.

Year End review: Department of Space

- **Announcement of Manned mission:** While addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 72nd Independence Day, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi announced that India has resolved to send manned spacecraft to the space by 2022 and India will be the fourth country to do this. So far, only the USA, Russia and China have launched human spaceflight missions. While addressing a press conference in New Delhi on 28th August, ISRO Chairman, Dr. K. Sivan said that Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has the capabilities to accomplish this task by the given timeframe.
- **ISRO** has developed some critical technologies like re-entry mission capability, crew escape system, crew module configuration, thermal protection system, deceleration and floatation system, sub-systems of life support system etc. required for this programme. Some of these technologies have been demonstrated successfully through the Space Capsule Recovery Experiment (SRE-2007), Crew module Atmospheric Reentry Experiment (CARE-2014) and Pad Abort Test (2018). These technologies will enable ISRO in accomplishing the programme objectives in a short span of 4 years.
- **Launches by ISRO** i). ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, in its forty second flight, PSLV-C40 successfully launched the 710 kg Cartosat-2 Series Remote Sensing Satellite along with 30 co-passenger satellites on 12th January, 2018, from Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota. The 11 kg INS-1C and the 100 kg class Microsat were the two Indian co-passenger satellites of Cartosat-2. The 28 international customer satellites belonged to Canada, Finland, France, Republic of Korea, UK and the USA.
- **ii). India's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F08)** successfully launched GSAT-6A Satellite into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) on 29th March, 2018. This was the fifth consecutive success achieved by GSLV carrying indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage. GSAT-6A is a communication satellite built by ISRO to provide mobile communication services through multi beam coverage. For this, it is equipped with S and C band transponders.
- **iii). In its forty third flight**, ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C41 successfully launched the 1,425 kg IRNSS-1I Navigation Satellite on 12th April, 2018, from Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota. IRNSS-1I is the latest member of the 'Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)' system. NavIC, also known as Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide position information in the Indian region and 1,500 km around the Indian mainland.
- **iv). The Polar** Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C42) of ISRO successfully launched two satellites -- NovaSAR and S1-4-- from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota on 16th September, 2018. The satellites belong to UK-based Surrey Satellite Technology Limited (SSTL), which has a contract with Antrix Corporation Ltd, the commercial arm of ISRO. NovaSAR carries S-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and an Automatic Identification Receiver

payloads. The satellite applications include forestry mapping, land use and ice cover monitoring, flood and disaster monitoring and maritime missions. It will be operated from SSTL's Spacecraft Operations Centre in Guildford, UK. S1-4 is a high resolution earth observation satellite meant for surveying resources, environment monitoring, urban management and disaster monitoring.

- **v). ISRO's** Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C43) successfully launched 31 satellites from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) on 29th November, 2018, in Sriharikota. HysIS is an earth observation satellite built around ISRO's Mini Satellite2 (IMS-2) bus weighing about 380kg. The mission life of the satellite is five years. The primary goal of HysIS is to study the earth's surface in both the visible, near infrared and shortwave infrared regions of the electromagnetic spectrum. HysIS had the company of one micro and 29 nano-satellites from eight countries, including Australia (1), Canada (1), Columbia (1), Finland (1), Malaysia (1), Netherlands (1), Spain (1) and USA (23).
- **vi). India's** GSAT-29 communication satellite was successfully launched by the second developmental flight of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle MarkIII (GSLV MkIII-D2) today from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota, on 14th November, 2018. GSLV Mk III is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). GSAT-29 is a multiband, multi-beam communication satellite, intended to serve as test bed for several new and critical technologies. Its Ku-band and Ka-band payloads are configured to cater to the communication requirements of users including those from remote areas especially from Jammu & Kashmir and North-Eastern regions of India.
- **vii). ISRO's** heaviest and most-advanced high throughput communication satellite GSAT-11 was successfully launched from the Spaceport in French Guiana during the early hours on 5th December, 2018. GSAT-11 will act as a forerunner to all future high throughput communication satellites. The 5,854-kg GSAT-11 will provide high data rate connectivity to users of Indian mainland and islands through 32 user beams in Ku-band and 8 hub beams in Ka-band.
- **viii). ISRO's** Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F11) successfully launched the communication satellite GSAT-7A from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota on 19th December, 2018. GSAT-7A is the heaviest satellite launched by GSLV with an indigenously developed cryogenic stage. GSAT-7A is an advanced communication satellite with a Gregorian Antenna and many other new technologies.
- **On 6th June, 2018**, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the PSLV Continuation Programme (Phase 6) and funding of thirty PSLV operational flights under the Programme. The Programme will also meet the launch requirement of satellites for Earth observation, Navigation and Space Sciences. This will also ensure the continuity of production in Indian industry. The total fund requirement is Rs. 6131.00 Crores and includes the cost of thirty PSLV vehicles, essential facility augmentation, Programme Management and Launch Campaign. The Cabinet also approved funding for the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark-III (GSLV Mk-III) continuation programme (Phase-I) consisting of ten (10) GSLV (Mk-III) flights, at a total estimated cost of Rs. 4338.20 crores.

Discovery of a sub-Saturn or super-neptune size planet

- **A Team of scientists** and engineers led by Prof. Abhijit Chakraborty of Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad, discovered a sub-Saturn or super-neptune size planet (mass of about 27 Earth Mass and size of 6 Earth Radii) around a Sun-like star. The planet will be known as EPIC 211945201b or K2-236b. With this discovery, India has joined a handful of countries, which have discovered planets around stars beyond our solar system. Further, PARAS is the first of its kind spectrograph in Asia, which can measure the mass of a planet going around a star. Very few spectrographs exist around the world that can do such precise measurements.
- **Pad Abort Test** successful to qualify Crew Escape System required for Human Spaceflight The ISRO carried out Pad Abort Test successfully to qualify Crew Escape System required for Human Spaceflight, on 5th July 2018 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- **As part of the activities** for development of critical technologies for future Human Spaceflight, Pad Abort Test was carried out to demonstrate the Crew Escape System during any exigency at launch pad. The Crew Escape System is configured using specially designed quick acting solid motors that deliver a relatively large thrust to take the crew module to a safe distance. Experimental data from this mission will serve as a useful input to undertake human spaceflight programme. An amount of Rs.173.00 crores is approved for development of critical technologies including Crew Escape System.
- **Transfer of the in-house** developed Li-ion cell technology to competent Indian Industries. One of the major Centres of ISRO, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), offered to transfer the in-house developed Li-ion cell technology to competent Indian Industries on non-exclusive basis to establish Li-ion cell production facilities in the country. This initiative is expected to enable Zero Emission Policy of India and accelerate the development of indigenous electric vehicle industry.

MoU between ISRO and Central University of Jammu

- **ISRO signed** an MoU with the Central University of Jammu (CUJ) in Jammu for setting up of the Satish Dhawan Center for Space Science in the University, on 11th October, 2018. Another MoU was signed between CUJ and the Central Scientific Instruments Organization (CSIR-CSIO) to create awareness about space research and to motivate young minds to take up research related to space, astronomy, geology, atmospheric sciences and related fields, a two day workshop

was also inaugurated at the CUJ campus.

- **MoU between MHA and ISRO** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and ISRO, Department of Space signed a MoU in New Delhi on 20th September, 2018, for setting up of an state-of-the-art Integrated Control Room for Emergency Response (ICR-ER) in Ministry of Home Affairs. ISRO will render its technical expertise for setting up of proposed ICR-ER whereas the project will be executed under overall supervision of MHA. The proposed Control Room is expected to be established in next one-and-a-half year.
- **MoUs with foreign countries.** During the year 2018, India signed various MoUs with foreign countries. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of these MoUs. These agreements are:
 - **MoU between India** and Tajikistan on Cooperation on Peaceful uses of Space Technology for Development. The MoU was signed on 8th October 2018 at Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The MoU would lead to set up a Joint Working Group, drawing members from DOS/ISRO and the State Committee of Land Management and Geodesy of Republic of Tajikistan, which will further work out the plan of action including the time-frame and the means of implementing this MoU.
 - **Agreement between India** and Uzbekistan on Cooperation in the exploration and uses of Outer Space for peaceful purposes. The Agreement was signed on 1st October 2018 at New Delhi during the State visit of the President of Uzbekistan to India. The signing of the Agreement will strengthen the cooperation between India and Uzbekistan and would provide impetus to explore newer research activities and application possibilities in the field of remote sensing; satellite communication; satellite navigation; space science and exploration of outer space.
 - **MoU between India** and Morocco for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The MoU was signed at New Delhi on 25th September 2018. The MoU would lead to set up a Joint Working Group, drawing members from DOS/ISRO and Royal Centre for Remote Sensing (CRTS) and the Royal Centre for Space Research and Studies (CRERS), which will further work out the plan of action including the time-frame and the means of implementing the MoU.
 - **Agreement between India** and Algeria on Cooperation in the field of Space Sciences, Technologies and Applications. The Agreement was signed at Bengaluru on 19th September 2018. Signing of the Agreement will strengthen the cooperation between India and Algeria, and provide impetus to explore newer research activities and application possibilities in the field of remote sensing of the earth, satellite navigation, space science and exploration of outer space.
 - **MoU between India** and Brunei Darussalam on Cooperation in the operation of Telemetry Tracking and Telecommand station for satellite and launch vehicles, and for cooperation in the field of Space Research, Science and Applications. The MoU was signed in New Delhi on 19th July 2018.
 - **MoU between India** and South Africa on cooperation in the exploration and uses of outer space for peaceful purposes. The MoU was signed in Johannesburg on 26th July 2018. Signing of this MoU shall enable pursuing the potential areas of cooperation such as space science, technology and applications including remote sensing of the earth, satellite communication and satellite-based navigation; space science and planetary exploration; use of spacecraft and space systems and ground systems; and application of space technology.
 - **MoU signed between India** represented by the ISRO and Oman represented by the Ministry of Transport and Communications on Cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, in February, 2018 at Muscat. This MoU shall enable the following areas of cooperation such as, space science, technology and applications including remote sensing of the earth; satellite based navigation; Space science and planetary exploration; use of spacecraft and space systems and ground system; and application of space technology.

Indian Forest and Tribal Service

- **Background:** The renaming is based on the recommendation made by the NCST which highlights the close ties between tribals, the forest and forest ecosystem. Merging forest and tribal welfare administrations will further the participation of 'tribals' in forest management. Renaming will also engender greater sensitivity on the forest department's part towards the needs of 'tribal' communities.
- **About the Indian Forest Service:** During the year 1864 the then British India Government started the Imperial Forest Department and appointed Dr. Dietrich Brandis, a German Forest officer Inspector General of Forests in 1866.
- **Having recognized** the need to have a premier forest service to manage the varied natural resources of the vast country and to organize the affairs of the Imperial Forest Department, Imperial Forest Service was constituted in 1867.
- **The subject of "Forestry"** was transferred to the "Provincial List" by the Government of India Act, 1935 and subsequently recruitment to the Imperial Forest Service was discontinued.
- **The Indian Forest Service**, one of the three All India Services, was constituted in the year 1966 under the All India Services Act, 1951 by the Government of India.
- **The main mandate** of the service is the implementation of the National Forest Policy which envisages scientific management of forests and to exploit them on a sustained basis for primary timber products, among other things.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

- **Background:** Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), the flagship programme launched with much fanfare in 2016, has run into rough weather. With both the area covered and the number of enrolled farmers declining, the country's premium crop insurance scheme is certainly in need of an overhaul.
- **Challenges at present:** Insufficient reach and the issue of penetration. Data constraints: With just around 45% of the claims made by farmers over the last three crop seasons data for the last rabi season is not available paid by the insurance companies.
- **Low payout of claims:** The reason for the very low payout of claims is that only few state governments are paying their share of the premiums on time and till they do, the central government doesn't pay its share either. Till they get the premium, insurance companies simply sit on the claims.
- **Gaps in assessment of crop loss:** There is hardly any use of modern technology in assessing crop damages. There is lack of trained outsourced agencies, scope of corruption during implementation and the non-utilisation of technologies like smart phones and drones to improve reliability of such sampling
- **Less number** of notified crops than can avail insurance, Inadequate and delayed claim payment. High actuarial premium rates: Insurance companies charged high actuarial premium rates.
- **If states** delay notifications, or payment of premiums, or crop cutting data, companies cannot pay compensation to the farmers in time. Poor capacity to deliver: There has been no concerted effort by the state government and insurance companies to build awareness of farmers on PMFBY. Insurance companies have failed to set-up infrastructure for proper Implementation of PMFBY.
- **PMBY** is not beneficial for farmers in vulnerable regions as factors like low indemnity levels, low threshold yields, low sum insured and default on loans make it a poor scheme to safeguard against extreme weather events.
- **About PMFBY:** In April, 2016, the government of India had launched Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) after rolling back the earlier insurance schemes viz. National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), Weather-based Crop Insurance scheme and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).
- **Premium:** It envisages a uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers for Kharif crops, and 1.5% for Rabi crops. The premium for annual commercial and horticultural crops will be 5%. The scheme is mandatory for farmers who have taken institutional loans from banks. It's optional for farmers who have not taken institutional credit.
- **Objectives:** Providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events. Stabilizing the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming. Encouraging farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices. Ensuring flow of credit to the agriculture sector which contributes to food security, crop diversification and enhancing growth and competitiveness o agriculture sector besides protecting farmers from production risks.

DNA technology Bill

- **Need for the legislation and its significance:** The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world. Therefore, the new bill aims to expand the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country.
- **Highlights of the Bill:** As per the Bill, national and regional DNA data banks will be set up for maintaining a national database for identification of victims, suspects in cases, undertrials, missing persons and unidentified human remains.
- **Punishment:** According to it, those leaking the DNA profile information to people or entities who are not entitled to have it, will be punished with a jail term of up to three years and a fine of up to Rs. 1 lakh. Similar, punishment has also been provided for those who seek the information on DNA profiles illegally.
- **Usage:** As per the bill, all DNA data, including DNA profiles, DNA samples and records, will only be used for identification of the person and not for "any other purpose".
- **The bill's** provisions will enable the cross-matching between persons who have been reported missing on the one hand and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country on the other, and also for establishing the identity of victims in mass disasters.

- **The Bill** establishes a DNA Regulatory Board to accredit the DNA laboratories that analyse DNA samples to establish the identity of an individual.
- **Benefits of the Bill:** By providing for the mandatory accreditation and regulation of DNA laboratories, the Bill seeks to ensure that with the proposed expanded use of this technology in the country. There is also the assurance that the DNA test results are reliable and the data remain protected from misuse or abuse in terms of the privacy rights of our citizens.
- **DNA technology- significance and concerns:** DNA analysis is an extremely useful and accurate technology in ascertaining the identity of a person from his/her DNA sample, or establishing biological relationships between individuals.
- **A hair sample**, or even bloodstains from clothes, from a scene of crime, for example, can be matched with that of a suspect, and it can, in most cases, be conclusively established whether the DNA in the sample belongs to the suspected individual. As a result, DNA technology is being increasingly relied upon in investigations of crime, identification of unidentified bodies, or in determining parentage.
- **But information** from DNA samples can reveal not just how a person looks, or what their eye colour or skin colour is, but also more intrusive information like their allergies, or susceptibility to diseases. As a result, there is a greater risk of information from DNA analysis getting misused.
- **It is expected** that the expanded use of DNA technology would result not only in speedier justice delivery but also in increased conviction rates, which at present is only around 30% (NCRB Statistics for 2016).

Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite

- **THE NEW PLANET:** The new planet is named HD 21749b. The newly discovered planet orbits a bright and nearby star which is about 53 light years away in the constellation Reticulum. HD 21749b appears to have the longest orbital period of the three planets so far identified by TESS. The surface of the new planet is hotter than 100 degrees Celsius.
- **About TESS mission:** The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) is a NASA mission that will look for planets orbiting the brightest stars in Earth's sky. It was led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with seed funding from Google.
- **Mission:** The mission will monitor at least 200,000 stars for signs of exoplanets, ranging from Earth-sized rocky worlds to huge gas giant planets. TESS, however, will focus on stars that are 30 to 100 times brighter than those Kepler examined. This will help astronomers better understand the structure of solar systems outside of our Earth, and provide insights into how our own solar system formed.
- **Orbit:** TESS will occupy a never-before-used orbit high above Earth. The elliptical orbit, called P/2, is exactly half of the moon's orbital period; this means that TESS will orbit Earth every 13.7 days. Its closest point to Earth (67,000 miles or 108,000 kilometers) is about triple the distance of geosynchronous orbit, where most communications satellites operate.
- **How it works?** It will use transit method to detect exoplanets. It watches distant stars for small dips in brightness, which can indicate that planet has passed in front of them. Repeated dips will indicate planet passing in front of its star. This data has to be validated by repeated observations and verified by scientists.
- **Significance of the mission:** TESS is designed to build on the work of its predecessor, the Kepler space telescope, which discovered the bulk of some 3,700 exoplanets documented during the past 20 years and is running out of fuel. Nasa expects to pinpoint thousands more previously unknown worlds, perhaps hundreds of them Earth-sized or "super-Earth" sized – no larger than twice as big as our home planet.
- **Those are believed** the most likely to feature rocky surfaces or oceans and are thus considered the best candidates for life to evolve. Scientists have said they hope TESS will ultimately help catalog at least 100 more rocky exoplanets for further study in what has become one of astronomy's newest fields of exploration.

Transport Subsidy Scheme

- **North Eastern Region (including Sikkim) under North Eastern Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS) – 2017** Jammu & Kashmir under Industrial Development Scheme – 2017 Lakshadweep and A&N Islands under Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Island Development Scheme – 2018
- **Industrial Units can avail Incentives:** Under the above mentioned schemes, all eligible industrial units can avail incentive on transportation of only finished goods through Railways or the Railway Public Sector Undertakings, Inland Waterways or scheduled airline (shipping for Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands also) for five years from the date of commencement of commercial production/operation.

- **Freight Subsidy Scheme (FSS):** The FSS (2013) replaced the Transport Subsidy Scheme, 1971. It was in operation in all 8 North Eastern States, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, J&K, Darjeeling District of West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep islands. The FSS has been discontinued since 22.11.2016. But, the industrial units under these schemes during their currency are eligible for the benefits of the scheme. While the inland transport incentive is available for certain landlocked states, there is no proposal to provide the same to the state of Chhattisgarh.
- **Background:** About Transport Subsidy Scheme – Government of India had introduced Transport Subsidy Scheme (TSS) on 23.7.1971 to develop industrialization in the remote, hilly and inaccessible areas.
- **Scheme Objectives:** The objective is to develop industrialization in the remote, hilly and inaccessible areas in 8 North Eastern Region.
- **Implementing Agency:** DIPP (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion) is the implementing agency of TSS/FSS.
- **Monitoring and Review Mechanism:** In order to check any misuse, Directorates of Industries in each beneficiary State/UT are required to: Carry out periodical checks to ensure that the raw materials/finished goods for which transport subsidy is given is actually used for the intended purpose, To draw up procedures and arrangements for scrutinizing the claims and for promote payment of the claims, To lay down a system of pre-registration and to fix and indicate the capacity of the units during registration,
- **To lay down** procedure to ensure regular inflow of information regarding the movement of raw material and finished goods, To lay down that statistics of production and utilization of raw material should be maintained and kept open for inspection.

Green Technology in PMGSY

- **States' Contribution:** The State Governments are required to propose minimum 15% of total length of annual proposals under new technologies like Cement stabilization, Lime stabilization, Cold mix, Waste plastics, Cell filled concrete, Paneled cement concrete pavement, Fly ash etc.
- **Further Relaxation:** The Ministry of Rural Development specifications have also been relaxed in respect of grading of materials for Granular Sub Base layer in order to encourage the usage of locally available/naturally occurring material/marginal materials.
- **Current Scenario:** Andhra Pradesh Government had submitted proposal for converting 37 roads of 163.49 KM sanctioned under Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas with conventional method of construction to New Technology. There is no other proposal of the State on New Technology pending with the Government at present. The Ministry has so far sanctioned 35,922 KM length of roads using New Technologies and 22,983.96 KM have been completed.
- **Background:** Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) encourages the use of 'Green Technologies' and non-conventional materials like waste plastic, cold mix, geo-textiles, fly-ash, iron and copper slag etc in rural roads.
- **Objective of PMGSY:** The primary objective of PMGSY is to provide connectivity by way of all-weather roads. The programme also has an Upgradation component with a target to upgrade existing rural roads in order to ensure full farm to market connectivity.
- **With a view** to bringing transparency and responsiveness in governance, plug leakages and to quickly address the citizen grievances; PMGSY has been encouraging use of information technology, mobile technology and space technology.
- **Meri Sadak** – A mobile application "Meri Sadak" was launched to enable citizens to register complaints regarding the quality and pace of construction of PMGSY roads.

Job Fairs

- **Context:** The Ministry of Labour & Employment is implementing the National Career Service (NCS) Project to provide a variety of employment related services like job matching, career counseling, vocational guidance, information on skill development courses, etc.
- **Highlights of NCS Project:** It includes establishment of Model Career Centers by the State Government/Institutions of repute to provide variety of employment related services using technology. The NCS project has also been enhanced to interlink the Employment Exchanges with NCS portal and organizing job fairs.

- **Employment Exchanges/Model Career Centers** – functions under the administrative control of the State Governments/Institutions and they are organizing job fairs locally for the benefit of the job seekers from time to time.
- **Background:** A National ICT based portal is developed primarily to connect the opportunities with the aspirations of youth. The portal facilitates registration of job seekers, job providers, skill providers, career counselors, etc.

National Bamboo Mission

- **Context:** The restructured National Bamboo Mission (NBM) was approved in April, 2018 for implementation till the end of 14th Finance Commission i.e. 2019-2020.
- **Aim of the Mission:** It aims to inter-alia supplement farm income of farmers with focus on the development of complete value chain of bamboo sector linking growers with industry.
- **Implementation:** The scheme is being implemented in non-forest Government land, farmers field in States where it has social, commercial and economical advantage, including the bamboo rich States of North Eastern region and Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- **Till Now:** 88 Bamboo Treatment Units, 464 Product Development/Processing Units, 135 Infrastructure Projects for Promotion and Development of Bamboo Markets, and an area of 15740 ha for plantation has been approved.
- **Financial Assistance:** Financial Assistance to North Eastern States is provided in the ratio of 90:10 between Central & State Government. A number of consultations have been held with State Governments and Industry to invigorate the bamboo sector in the region.
- **Background:** About National Bamboo Mission – The Mission envisages promoting holistic growth of bamboo sector by adopting area-based, regionally differentiated strategy and to increase the area under bamboo cultivation and marketing.
- **Key Outputs:** Coverage of 1,05,000 ha area under bamboo in two years by ensuring adequate stocks of selected genetically superior quality planting material. Promotion and diversification of bamboo products through establishment of micro, small, medium & large processing units and development of value chain in bamboo.
- **Setting up** and strengthening of bamboo mandi/bazaars/rural haats, including promoting online trade. Enhanced cooperation within the country related to research, technology, product development, machinery, trade information and knowledge sharing platform particularly for NE States to give a boost to the low key bamboo based industry in the country.
- **Mission Structure:** The NBM will be a sub-scheme of National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) under the umbrella scheme Krishonnati Yojana.
- **Funding Pattern:** 60:40 between Centre and State Govt. for all States (excepting NE & Hilly states), 90:10 for the NE & Hilly States, and 100% for Union Territories/R&D Institutes/Bamboo Technology Support Groups (BTSGs) and National Level Agencies.

National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA)

- **Context:** The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) has been constituted under Section 171 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.
- **It is to ensure** the reduction in rate of tax or the benefit of input tax credit is passed on to the recipient by way of commensurate reduction in prices.
- **NAA has taken the following steps for customers get the full benefit of tax cuts:** Holding regular meetings with the Zonal Screening Committees and the Chief Commissioners of Central Tax to stress upon consumer awareness programs. Launching a helpline to resolve the queries of citizens regarding registration of complaints against profiteering.
- **Receiving complaints through email and NAA portal.** Working with consumer welfare organizations to facilitate outreach activities. A number of complaints regarding companies not passing on the full benefits of tax cuts to consumers have been received by the National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA).

- **Background: Vision and Mission of NAA** – The National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA) is the institutional mechanism under GST law to check the unfair profit-making activities by the trading community.
- **The Authority's** core function is to ensure that the benefits of the reduction in GST rates on goods and services made by GST Council and proportional change in the Input tax credit passed on to the ultimate consumers and recipient respectively by way of reduction in the prices by the suppliers.
- **Institutional Mechanism:** This institutional framework comprises the NAA, a Standing Committee, Screening Committees in every State and the Directorate General of Safeguards in the Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC).

Nilekani Panel to strengthen the Digital Payments Ecosystem:

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a high-level committee under Nandan Nilekani to suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments in the country.
- **RBI has provided the following terms of reference for the committee:** To encourage digitisation of payments and enhance financial inclusion through digitization. Reviewing the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country, identifying the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggesting ways to bridge them.
- **Assessing the current** levels of digital payments in financial inclusion. Suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments. Suggest a road map for increasing customer confidence and trust while accessing financial services through digital modes.
- **Undertake cross-country** analysis to identify best practices to accelerate digitisation of the economy and financial inclusion through greater use of digital payments. Suggest a medium-term strategy for deepening of digital payments.

First female chief economist of IMF:

- **First female chief economist of IMF:** Context: Gita Gopinath has joined International Monetary Fund as its chief economist. She is the first woman to occupy the post of chief economist of IMF. She is the 11th chief economist of the IMF.
- **Role of Chief Economist:** The Chief Economist is also the Director of the Fund's Research Department and is responsible for providing independent advice to the Fund on its policy issues, integrating ideas of the research in the design of policies, conveying these ideas to the policymakers inside and outside the fund and managing all research done at IMF.
- **The Chief Economist** is part of the senior leadership team of the IMF and directly advises the Managing Director. The Chief Economist also leads about a hundred PhD economists in the Research Department.



Year End Review 2018 Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare

- **Following** are the major highlights of the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare during the year 2018 Production Scenario of Major Agricultural Crops 2018-19 as per 1st Advance Estimates
- **The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW)** fixes target for the production of foodgrains in the country annually. The target for the production of foodgrains has been fixed at 290.25 million tonnes for the 2018-19. The production of foodgrains in the country has been estimated at 284.83 million tonnes (4th Advance Estimates) for 2017-18, which is a record. As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the rainfall in the country was normal (-9%) during South-West monsoon season (June to September 2018).
- **Production Scenario of Major Rabi Agricultural Crops 2017-18 (as per 4th Advance Estimates)** As per Fourth Advance Estimates for 2017-18, total Rabi Foodgrain production in the country is estimated at 144.10 million tonnes which is higher by 7.32 million tonnes than the previous record production of rabi foodgrain of 136.78 million tonnes achieved during 2016-17. The rabi production during 2017-18 is also higher by 13.58 million tonnes than the previous five years' (2012-13 to 2016-17) average production of foodgrain.
- **Total production** of Rabi Rice during 2017-18 is estimated at record 15.41 million tonnes. Production of rabi rice has increased by 2.01 million tonnes than the production of 13.40 million tonnes during 2016-17. It is also higher by 1.71 million tonnes than the five years' average production of 13.70 million tonnes.
- **Production of Wheat**, estimated at record 99.70 million tonnes, is higher by 1.19 million tonnes as compared to wheat production of 98.51 million tonnes achieved during 2016-17. Further, the production of wheat during 2017-18 is higher by 6.36 million tonnes than the average wheat production of 93.34 million tonnes.
- **Production of Rabi Nutri / Coarse Cereals** estimated at record 13.10 million tonnes is higher than the average production by 1.91 million tonnes. Further, it is also higher by 1.77 million tonnes as compared to their production of 11.33 million tonnes achieved during 2016-17.
- **Total Rabi Pulses** production during 2017-18 is estimated at record 15.89 million tonnes which is higher by 2.34 million tonnes than the previous year's production of 13.55 million tonnes. Moreover, the production of rabi pulses during 2017-18 is higher by 3.60 million tonnes than the Five years' average production of 12.29 million tonnes.
- **Total Rabi Oilseeds** production in the country during 2017-18 is estimated at 10.31 million tonnes which is marginally higher by 0.55 million tonnes than the production of 9.76 million tonnes during 2016-17. However, the production of rabi oilseeds during 2017-18 is higher by 0.92 million tonnes than the average rabi oilseeds production (2012-13 to 2016-17).

Production Scenario of Major Kharif Agricultural Crops 2018-19 as per 1st Advance Estimates

- **The production of foodgrains** in the country during Kharif 2018 has been estimated at 141.59 million tonnes (1st Advance Estimates) against 140.73 million tonnes (4th Advance Estimates) during kharif 2017, which is higher by 0.86 million tonnes. Further, kharif foodgrain production is 11.94 million tonnes more than the average production of five years (2012-13 to 2016-17) of 129.65 million tonnes.
- **Total production of Kharif rice** is estimated at 99.24 million tonnes. This is higher by 1.74 million tonnes than the last year's production of 97.50 million tonnes. Further, it is higher by 6.64 million tonnes over the average production of Kharif rice during the last five years.
- **The total production of Nutri / coarse cereals** in the country has decreased to 33.13 million tonnes as compared to 33.89 million tonnes during 2017-18. Production of Maize is expected to be 21.47 million tonnes which is higher by 1.23 million tonnes than that of last year's production of 20.24 million tonnes. Further, this is more than 4.40 million tonnes than the average production of maize during the last five years.
- **The total production of Kharif pulses** is estimated at 9.22 million tonnes which is lower by 0.12 million tonnes than the last year's production of 9.34 million tonnes. However, kharif pulses estimated production is 2.67 million tonnes more than the last five years average production.

- **The total production of Kharif** oilseeds in the country is estimated at 22.19 million tonnes as compared to 21.00 million tonnes during 2017-18, i.e., an increase of 1.19 million tonnes. Also, it is higher by 2.02 million tonnes than the average production of last five years
- **Production of Sugarcane is estimated** at 383.89 million tonnes which is higher by 6.99 million tonnes than the last year's production of 376.90 million tonnes. Further, it is higher by 41.85 million tonnes than the average production of last five years.
- **Estimated production of Cotton** is 32.48 million bales (of 170 kg each) and Production of Jute & Mesta estimated at 10.17 million bales (of 180 kg each).

Doubling of Farmers' Income

- **The Government has set a target** of doubling of farmers' income by the year 2022. The Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee under the Chairmanship of Chief Executive Officer, National Rainfed Area Authority, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare to examine issues relating to doubling of farmers' income and recommend a strategy to achieve doubling of farmers' income in real terms by the year 2022.
- **The committee has identified** seven sources of income growth viz, improvement in crop and livestock productivity; resource use efficiency or savings in the cost of production; increase in the cropping intensity; diversification towards high value crops; improvement in real prices received by farmers; and shift from farm to non-farm occupations. The committee is also looking into the investments in and for agriculture e.g. increasing public investments for agriculture-rural roads, rural electricity, irrigation; the need for policy support to enable investments by corporate sector in agriculture.
- **The Government has been reorienting** the agriculture sector by focusing on an income-centeredness which goes beyond achieving merely the targeted production. The income approach focuses on achieving high productivity, reduced cost of cultivation and remunerative price on the produce, with a view to earn higher profits from farming.
- **Several initiatives have already** been taken among each of the above mention strategies which inter-alia include:
 - **(i) Initiating market reforms** through the State Governments by amending the agriculture marketing regime. **(ii) Encouraging contract farming** through the State Governments by promulgating of Model Contract Farming Act.
 - **(iii) 22,000 Gramin Haats** are to be upgraded to work as centers of aggregation and for direct purchase of agricultural commodities from the farmers. **(iv) Launch of eNAM** initiative to provide farmers an electronic online trading platform.
 - **(v) Implementation** of flagship scheme of distribution of Soil Health Cards to farmers so that the use of fertilizers can be optimized. So far more than 15 crore Soil Health Cards have been distributed in two cycles.
 - **(vi) "Per drop more crop"** initiative under which drip/sprinkler irrigation is being encouraged for optimal utilization of water.
 - **(vii) "Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)"** under which organic farming is being promoted. North East is being developed as organic hub.
 - **(viii) A revised farmer friendly "Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)"** have been launched. The scheme covers various types of risks from pre-sowing to post harvest and the farmers have to pay very nominal premium.
 - **(ix) Under "Har Medh Par Ped"**, agro forestry is being promoted for supplementing farm income, increase risk management and climate resilient agriculture as an important component of Integrated Farming Systems
 - **(x) The Indian Forest Act, 1927** was amended to exclude bamboo from the definition of 'trees'. Henceforth bamboo grown outside forest area will not be regulated under the provisions of felling and transit rules. As a corollary the restructured National Bamboo Mission was launched for development of the value chain of bamboo as a measure to strengthen rural economy by linking the producer (farmer) to markets (industry). **(x) Launch of PM-Asha** scheme which will ensure MSP to farmers for oilseeds, pulses and copra.
 - **(xi) Minimum Support Price (MSP)** is notified by the Government for certain crops. Giving a major boost for the farmers income, the Government has approved the increase in the MSPs for all Kharif & Rabi crops for 2018-19 season at a level of at least 150 percent of the cost of production.
 - **(xii) Bee keeping** has been promoted under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) to increase the productivity of crops through pollination and increase the honey production as an additional source of income of farmers.
 - **(xiii) Rashtriya Gokul Mission** has been implemented to enhance milk production and productivity of bovines and to make milk production more remunerative to the farmers.
 - **(xiv) National Livestock Mission** has been implemented to increase productivity and genetic improvement of livestock.

- **(xv) Foreseeing high potential** in fisheries sector, a Blue Revolution with multi dimensional activities mainly focusing on fisheries production, both inland and marine is being implemented.
- **(xvi) The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**, one of the eight Missions under the PM's National Action Plan on Climate Change is anchored in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. The revised strategy document for 2018-2030 was prepared for enhancing preparedness of the agriculture and allied sector towards the challenges posed by climate change

Higher Production through Productivity Gains:

- **National Food Security Mission** NFSM programme is being implemented in 638 districts of 29 states of the country for increasing the production and productivity of foodgrain crops (rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals & nutri-cereals) through area expansion and productivity enhancement, restoring soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level and enhancing farm level economy to restore confidence amongst the farmers.
- **From the year 2018-19**, NFSM-Nutri-Cereals are being implemented in 202 districts of 14 states (Jowar in 88 districts of 10 states, Bajra in 88 districts of 9 states, Ragi in 44 districts of 8 states and other millets in 43 districts of 7 states). Maize is being implemented in 237 districts and Barley in 39 districts of the country. The North-eastern states, J&K and Himachal Pradesh have given flexibility for implementing the NFSM- Nutri-cereals programme.
- **A programme on additional** area coverage of Pulses during Rabi/Summer 2018-19 has been launched with an allocation of Rs.288.83 crores (GOI Share) to increase production of rabi/ summer pulses through area expansion. The additional allocation for implementation of the aforesaid programme has been made to 15 states.
- **As per the target**, NFSM has achieved the bumper production of rice, wheat, pulses and nutri-cum-coarse cereals, during 2017-18 (As per 4th advance estimates), the production of rice, wheat, pulses and coarse-cum-nutri- cereals have been achieved at the level of 112.91 million tonnes, 99.70 million tonnes, 25.23 million tonnes and 46.99 million tonnes respectively. The total foodgrains production achieved during 2017-18 is 284.83 million tonnes (3.5%) increase against last year.

New initiatives taken for increasing production and productivity of Pulses from 2016- 17 onwards:-

- **Breeder Seed** production of pulses was introduced under NFSM-Pulses programme. 150 Seed Hubs are being implemented for increasing certified seeds of indigenous production of pulses in India through the Indian Institute of Pulses Research (IIPR), Kanpur and their centres. Supplying of Minikits of pulses seed varieties not older than 10 years free of the cost (100% share) to the farmers.
- **In addition** to State Governments, the ICAR/KVKs/SAUs also involved in conducting the demonstrations on improved latest package of practices of pulses. 15% allocation is earmarked for pulses under NFSM for production of quality seeds through State Governments. The government has decided to create a buffer stock of pulses to control fluctuation of prices of pulses.
- **New initiatives taken for increasing production and productivity of Nutri-Cereals from 2018-19 onwards:-** Breeder seed production of nutri-cereals. Creation of seed hubs. Certified seed production. Seed minikits allocation. Strengthening/creation of Center of Excellence. Publicity of nutri-cereals. International Year of Millets:-
- **The proposal** of Government of India for celebrating an International Year of Millets by UN was endorsed by FAO Council for 2023.

Agriculture Extension

- **Skill Development:** During 2018-19, 882 skill training courses have been planned to impart skill training to 17560 rural youth and farmers with a budget provision of 15.46 crore.
- **Mass Media Support to Agriculture Extension (MMSAE):** So far 19105 numbers of Programmes telecast / Broadcast through DD Kisan, DD Regional Kendras and 97 FM All India Radio Kendras from 1st April 2018 to 30th November 2018 on Agriculture and Allied Sector.

Krishi Unnati Mela, 2018

- **A National level** 3rd Krishi Unnati Mela was organized by DAC&FW jointly with Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Department of Animal, Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India from 16-18 March, 2018 at Mela Ground, IARI, Pusa Campus, New Delhi.
- **FICCI** was selected as Project Management Agency (PMA) for organizing the Krishi Unnati Mela, 2018 through e-tender process.
- **The Hon'ble Prime Minister** of India visited the Krishi Unnati Mela at the IARI, Mela Ground Pusa, New Delhi on 17.03.2018. He visited the Theme Pavilion and the jaivik mahakumbh. He laid the foundation stone for 25 Krishi Vigyan Kendras(KVKs). He also launched an e-marketing portal for Organic Products. He gave away the Krishi Karman Award and the Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Krishi Protsahan Puraskar. The Prime Minister appreciated the spirit and the hardwork of our farmers for their achievements in agriculture since independence and further he said that there are important challenges in Agriculture today, which reduce the farmers' income, an increase his losses and expenditure. The Government is working with a holistic approach to deal with these challenges. He said the aim remains to double farmers' incomes and make the farmers lives easier.
- **The objective of the mela** was to create widespread awareness about the latest agricultural technological developments and receive feedback from the agricultural community, which helps in designing and shaping the Institute's future research strategy.
- **Theme pavilions on doubling** farmers' income by 2022, live demonstration on micro irrigation, waste water utilization and animal husbandry & fisheries was among the major attraction of the fair.
- **More than 600 stalls** were setup by the Central and State Governments, various organizations etc. in this fair.
- **New harvesting techniques** through organic means and its successful implementation the Javik Mahakumbh pavilion was a special attraction of the fair. In order to give a boost to Cooperatives a Sehkar Sammelan was also organized. Apart from this, 09 farmers-scientist discussions (3 each day) were organized on important issues.
- **About 26000 farmers** comprising 17000 from ATMA, 5000 through KVK and 4000 from ICAR from different States visited the Krishi Unnati Mela, 2018. Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), State Agriculture Universities (SAUs), State Agriculture/ Horticulture Departments, Entrepreneurs, Private Agencies involved in agriculture were also participated in the mela.
- **Ways to enhance farmer's** income through theme pavilions like micro irrigation, neem-coated urea, soil check/Soil Health Card, reducing costs through less use of fertilizer, effectiveness of crop insurance scheme and new dimensions of income generation, such as animal husbandry, bee keeping, poultry farming were showcased in the mela. Through a Live demo, farmers witnessed actual farming at the fair.
- **Major highlights of the mela:** More than 600 stalls Display of latest agriculture & allied sector technologies Live Demonstrations on Micro-irrigation, waste water utilization, Animal husbandry (Pashudhan) and Fisheries etc.
- **Seminars and conferences** Theme pavilion: Doubling Farmers' Income by 2022 Javik Maha Kumbh-on organic farming Sahkar Samelan Pavilion for inputs (seed, fertilizers, pesticides supplying agencies) Horticulture/ Dairy, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries ICAR / IARI Stalls of Ministry of Textile, Ministry of Food Processing and Industry, Ministry of Commerce and North East Council.
- **Celebration of Mahila Kisan Diwas** Mahila Kisan Diwas was organised on October 14-15, 2018 at NAS Complex with participation of various stakeholders' viz. Women farmers, NGOs, Women Entrepreneurs, Academia, Researchers/Scientists, Farmer Organisations, Representatives from Banking Sector, Industry etc. In all around 450 participants attended this event. The focus of the event was to learn and address issues and constraints related to women farmers in Agriculture; Animal Husbandry, Dairying, Fisheries and other off-farm activities and their access to institutional credit and micro-financing and building agri-enterprises.
- **A total 44 progressive** women farmers from across the country were felicitated during celebration of Mahila Kisan Diwas @ 2 farm women per State – one from agriculture and other from allied sectors based on the nominations made by their respective States. An exhibition was also organised for the benefit of visiting women farmers.

National Conference on “Agriculture 2022 – Doubling Farmers’ Income”

- **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW)** organized a two-day National Conference under the title "Agriculture 2022 – Doubling Farmers' Income" on 19th and 20th February, 2018 at National Agriculture Science Complex (NASC), Pusa, New Delhi. This Conference was organized on the advice of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, with a view to identifying various critical issues relating to agriculture and farmers' welfare and finding appropriate solutions. On 20th February, 2018, the Hon'ble Prime Minister emphasized that efforts are being made to build a new culture that will empower farmers. The focus was being laid on four key areas: reducing input costs, ensuring a fair price for the produce, reducing wastage, and creating alternate sources of income.
- **Hon'ble Agriculture Minister**, Shri Radha Mohan Singh inaugurated the conference on 19th February, 2018 and reiterated that the government is keen to make agriculture policies and programmes income centric. Nearly 300 select participants participated in the conference including farmers, farmers' associations, scientists, economists, academics, industry experts, professional associations, Non-Governmental Organizations and policy makers. Seven broad themes such as Agricultural Policy and Reforms for Higher And Sustained Farmers' Income; Trade Policy and Export Promotion; Marketing, Agri-logistics and Agri-value System; Science and Technology, ICT and Start-ups in Agriculture; Sustainable and Equitable Development and Efficient Delivery of Services; Capital Investments and Institutional Credit for Farmers; Promotion of Livestock and Dairy, Poultry and Fishery as Engines of Growth were discussed during the conference.

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

- **Area Expansion:-** An additional area of 76015 ha. of identified horticulture crops has been covered Rejuvenation: - An area of 5060 ha. of old and senile orchards has been rejuvenated.
- **Organic Farming:** - An area of 200 ha. has been covered. Integrated Pests/Nutrient Management: - An area of 33684 ha. has been covered under IPM/INM
- **Protected Cultivation:** - An area of 22137 ha. has been covered under Protected Cultivation. Water Resources: - 1814 water harvesting structures have been created. Beekeeping: 29102 bee colonies with hives have been distributed. Horticulture Mechanization:-9343 horticulture mechanization equipments have been distributed.
- **Post Harvest Management Infrastructures:** - 3437 post harvest units have been established. Market Infrastructures:- 215 market infrastructures have been set up. Training of Farmers: -Under HRD, 98271 farmers have been trained under various horticulture activities.
- **State of Kerala** has been granted special package of Rs. 56.03 crore (Central Share). Civil work of India park in International Expo to be held in Beijing, China in 2019, has been completed. Under Indo-Israel Cooperation, 30 Centre of Excellence has been approved, out of which 4 has been inaugurated this year.
- **Information Technology** Number of farmers registered on M-kisan portal of this department for receiving agro-advisories increased to 49360436 as on 14-12-2018 from 24162069 as on 31-12-2017.
- **The downloads** of Kisan Suvidha app increased to 901192 downloads as on 14-12-2018 from 294255 downloads as on 31-12-2017. 04 new services added to Kisan Suvidha mobile app during the year, raising the services available on the app to 10.

Innovation and Agri-Entrepreneurship under RKVY-RAFTAAR

- **The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna (RKVY)** is an important scheme of the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW), aimed at strengthening infrastructure in agriculture and allied areas. In order to promote agripreneurship and agribusiness by providing financial support and nurturing the incubation ecosystem, a new component under the revamped scheme RKVY- RAFTAAR has been launched in 2018-19 with 10% of annual outlay including 2% of the total outlay for administrative purposes.
- **In this connection**, DAC&FW has appointed five Knowledge Partners (KPs) namely MANAGE.3, Hyderabad, NIAM Jaipur, IARI Pusa, University of Agriculture Science, Dharwad, Karnataka and Assam Agriculture University, Jorhat for implementation assistance to advise on smooth and efficient execution of the scheme, handholding of R-ABIs and other related matters etc.
- **Under this scheme**, new agribusiness incubators will be established as well as existing agribusiness incubators strengthened as RKVY — RAFTAR Agribusiness Incubators (RABIs) with need-based infrastructure, equipment and manpower. These R-ABIs will in turn invite applications from agripreneurs in different stages of the business life cycle (ideation/expansion) and provide them an opportunity to generate innovations in agriculture and allied sector.

Reduction in cost of cultivation: Agricultural Mechanization-Crop Residue Management Scheme

- **In pursuance** to Budget 2018 announcement a new Central Sector Scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi' for the period from 2018-19 to 2019-20 has been introduced with the total outgo from the Central funds of Rs. 1151.80 crore (Rs. 591.65 crore in 2018-19 and Rs. 560.15 crore in 2019-20).
- **The Scheme** has the following components (100% Central Share) Establish Farm Machinery Banks for Custom Hiring of in-situ crop residue management machinery- Financial assistance @ 80% of the project cost is provided to the Co-operative Societies of farmers, FPOs, Self-Help Groups, registered Farmers Societies / farmers groups, Private Entrepreneurs, Group of women farmers or self-help groups for establishment of farm machinery banks or custom hiring centres of in-situ crop residue management machinery.
- **Financial Assistance** to farmers for Procurement of Agriculture Machinery and Equipment for in-situ crop residue management- Financial assistance @ 50% of the cost of machinery/equipment is provided to individual farmers for purchase of machinery/equipment for crop residue management.
- **Information, Education and Communication** for awareness on in-situ crop residue management- Financial assistance is provided to the State Governments, KVKs, ICAR Institutions, Central Government Institutions, PSUs etc. for the activities to be undertaken towards Information, Education and Communication (IEC).
- **The Secretary DAC&FW** through Video Conferencing with the State level and District level officers is regularly monitoring the progress as well as burning incidences under the scheme. The Video Conferences have been held on 11.10.2018, 17.10.2018, 25.10.2018, 01.11.2018 & 12.11.2018, 20.11.2018, 28.11.2018 and 18.12.2018
- **The progress of the scheme** also monitored by the High Level Monitoring Committee under the chairmanship of Secretary (Department of Agriculture, Research and Education) and DG (Indian Council of Agricultural Research). The meetings have been held on 02.08.2018, 20.09.2018, 26.10.2018 & 15.11.2018

Soil Health Management

- **Soil Health Management (SHM)** is one of the components under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). SHM aims at promoting Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) through judicious use of chemical fertilizers including secondary and micro nutrients in conjunction with organic manures and biofertilizers for improving soil health and its productivity;
- **strengthening** of soil and fertilizer testing facilities to provide soil test based recommendations to farmers for improving soil fertility; ensuring quality control requirements of fertilizers, biofertilizers and organic fertilizers under Fertilizer Control Order, 1985; upgradation of skill and knowledge of soil testing laboratory staff, extension staff and farmers through training and demonstrations; promoting organic farming practices etc.
- **Under the scheme**, a sum of Rs. 7168.00 lakh released to States for setting up of 6 Static Soil Testing Laboratories (STLS), 6 Mobile Soil Testing Laboratories, 1561 Village Soil Testing labs, 139 Strengthening of STLs, 2 Fertilizer Quality Control Labs (FQCLs), 21 Strengthening of FQCLs sanctioned to States.

Soil Health Card Scheme

- **"Soil Health Card"** Scheme is under implementation in the country since February 2015 to provide Soil Health Card to all farmers in the country. Soil Health Card will provide information to farmers on soil nutrient status of their soil and recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrient to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility. Soil Health card will be issued every 2 years for all land holdings in the country.
- **Under the Scheme**, during the year, a sum of Rs. 18769.73 lakh released to States. During the 2nd Cycle of the scheme (2017-18 to 2018-19), 255.48 lakh soil samples collected, 202.34 lakh soil samples tested and 687.59 lakh soil health cards distributed to farmers.

- **Parampragat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)** is the first comprehensive scheme launched as a Centrally Sponsored Programme (CSP) from 2015-17, which now has been revised for next 3 years.
- **The scheme** is implemented with a 90:10 (Gol: State Govt.) funding pattern in 8 NE states and 3 hilly states of J& K, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, 100% in Union Territory and 60:40 funding pattern in remaining states of the country.
- **The new guidelines** of the scheme has been uploaded in the website www.agricoop.nic.in
- **The scheme PKVY** is implemented by the State Government on per hectare basis for 500-1000 hectare area in each cluster. A group of farmers having a total area of 20 hectare as far as possible in contiguous patch within a village.
- **The farmer** within a group can avail benefit to a maximum of 2 ha. and the limit of assistance is Rs.50, 000 per hac., out of which 62% i.e., Rs. 31,000 is given as incentives to a farmer for organic conversion, organic inputs, on farm inputs, production infrastructure, etc., shall be provided directly through DBT during the conversion period of 3 years.
- **The target** of an area of around 4 lacks ha is proposed to be covered in the coming 2 years which is double the area covered in last three year

Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER)

- **Realizing the potential** of organic farming in the North Eastern Region of the country, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has launched a Central Sector Scheme entitled "Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region" for implementation in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, during 2015-16 to 2017-18.
- **The scheme aims** at development of certified organic production in a value chain mode to link growers with consumers and to support the development of entire value chain starting from inputs, seeds, certification and creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, marketing and brand building initiative. The scheme was approved with an outlay of Rs. 400 crore for three years.
- **The assistance is provided** for cluster development, on/off farm input production, supply of seeds/ planting materials, setting up of functional infrastructure, establishment of integrated processing unit, refrigerated transportation, pre-cooling /cold stores chamber, branding labeling and packaging, hiring of space, hand holdings, organic certification through third party, mobilization of farmers/processors etc.
- **Under this scheme**, an area of 50,000 ha have been targeted to be covered under organic farming in North Eastern Region of the country during the period of three years i.e. from year 2015-16 to 2017-18.
- **Major components of MOVCDNER:** Value Chain Production Value Chain Processing Value Chain Marketing Value Chain Support Agencies
- **Physical and Financial Progress report of MOVCDNER scheme** A) Fund Released: During the year 2015-16 an amount of Rs. 112.11crore has been released. During the year 2016-17 an amount of Rs47.63crore has been released. III. During the year 2017-18 an amount of Rs 66.22 crore has been released. IV. In the current financial year 2018-19 an amount of Rs126.25crore have been released to eight states.
- **B) Physical progress:** MOVCDNER PH -1 - As on against target of 50000 ha area, 45918 ha area brought under the Organic Farming. All the 100 FPCs have been achieved, against the target of 2500 FIGs, 2469 FIGs has been formed, and 48948 farmers are mobilized. MOVCDNER PH -2 - As on against target of 50000 ha area, 20103 ha area brought under the Organic Farming. Against the target of 2500 FIGs 876 FIGs has been formed and 19924 farmers are mobilized.

Organic Assam

- **Organic Store** by Sikkim State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation Ltd.& Kendriya Bhandar.
- **Opened Organic** retail outlet cum restaurant at Dilli Haat, INA, New Delhi and implemented through North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC).

- **Participation in exhibitions and Trade fairs** Buyer seller meets, workshops, videos, photographs and publicity material Activities & competitions with MyGov
- **NERAMAC & NAFED** is providing hand-holding in marketing of Organic produce / branded organic products.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) –Per Drop More Crop

- **Department of Agriculture**, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare is implementing Per Drop More Crop component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), which is operational from 2015-16 in the country. PMKSY (Per Drop More Crop) mainly focuses on water use efficiency at farm level through precision/micro irrigation. Besides promoting precision irrigation (Drip and Sprinkler Irrigation System) and better on-farm water management practices to optimize the use of available water resources, this component also supports micro level water storage or water conservation/management activities as Other Interventions(OI) to supplement source creation.
- **Allocation for 2018-19:** Rs.4000 crore(BE) Release made so far: Rs. 1978.26 Achievement: About 6.1 lakh ha so far Micro Irrigation Fund
- **In order** to achieve the objective of enhancing water use efficiency in agriculture sector and bring about desired growth, Finance Minister announced in the Union Budget for 2017-18 setting up of a dedicated fund in NABARD titled "Micro Irrigation Fund" (MIF) with initial corpus of Rs.5000 crores.
- **Cabinet Committee** on Economic Affairs (CCEA) in its meeting held on 16th May, 2018 approved a dedicated Micro Irrigation Fund created with NABARD with an initial corpus of Rs. 5000 crore (Rs. 2000 crore for 2018-19 & Rs. 3000 crore for 2019-20) for encouraging public and private investments in Micro irrigation.
- **The main objective** of the fund is to facilitate the States in mobilizing the resources for expanding coverage of Micro Irrigation by taking up special and innovative projects and also for incentivizing micro irrigation beyond the provisions available under Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) to encourage farmers to install micro irrigation systems.

Rainfed Area Development Programme

- **Rainfed Area Development(RAD)** programme under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture(NMSA) focuses on Integrated Farming System (IFS) for enhancing productivity and minimizing risks associated with climatic variabilities. Under this system, crops/cropping system is integrated with activities like horticulture, livestock, fishery, agro-forestry, apiculture etc. to enable farmers to mitigate the impacts of drought, flood or other extreme weather events with the income opportunity from allied activities during crop damage.
- **Allocation for 2018-19: Rs.234 crore(BE)** Against the allocated amount to the States, an amount of Rs. 148.09 crore has been released. About 34000 ha of area has been achieved under various Integrated Farming Systems which sustainable for climatic variations.
- **To ensure remunerative returns:** Enhancing of Minimum Support Price- MSP declared at 150% of Cost of Production The Union Budget for 2018-19 had announced the pre-determined principle to keep MSP at levels of one and half times the cost of production. Accordingly, Government has increased the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for all notified Kharif, Rabi and other commercial crops with a return of at least 50 percent of cost of production for the season 2018-19. This decision of the Government was a historic one as it fulfills the commitment to the farmers to provide 50 per cent return over cost of production for the first time for all mandated crops.
- *** Includes all paid** out costs such as those incurred on account of hired human labour, bullock labour/machine labour, rent paid for leased in land, expenses incurred on use of material inputs like seeds, fertilizers, manures, irrigation charges, depreciation on implements and farm buildings, interest on working capital, diesel/electricity for operation of pump sets etc, miscellaneous expenses and imputed value of family labour.

Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)

- **Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)** Cabinet approves New Umbrella Scheme "Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan" (PM-AASHA) PM-AASHA will provide MSP assurance to farmers: A reflection of Government's commitment to the "Annadata"

- **Giving a major boost** to the pro-farmer initiatives of the Government and in keeping with its commitment and dedication for the Annadata, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved a new Umbrella Scheme "Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan" (PM-AASHA). The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in the Union Budget for 2018.
- **This is an unprecedented** step taken by Govt. of India to protect the farmers' income which is expected to go a long way towards the welfare of farmers. Government has already increased the MSP of kharif crops by following the principle of 1.5 times the cost of production. It is expected that the increase in MSP will be translated to farmer's income by way of robust procurement mechanism in coordination with the State Governments.
- **Components of PM-AASHA:** The new Umbrella Scheme includes the mechanism of ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers and is comprised of
 - **Price Support Scheme (PSS)**, Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS). The other existing schemes of Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) for procurement of paddy, wheat and nutri-cereals/coarse grains and of Ministry of Textile for cotton and jute will be continued for providing MSP to farmers for these crops.
 - **Cabinet** has also decided that participation of private sector in procurement operation needs to be piloted so that on the basis of learnings the ambit of private participation in procurement operations may be increased. Therefore, in addition to PDPS, it has been decided that for oilseeds, states have the option to roll out Private Procurement Stockist Scheme (PPSS) on pilot basis in selected district/APMC(s) of district involving the participation of private stockiest. The pilot district/selected APMC(s) of district will cover one or more crop of oilseeds for which MSP is notified. Since this is akin to PSS, in that it involves physical procurement of the notified commodity, it shall substitute PSS/PDPS in the pilot districts.
 - **The selected private** agency shall procure the commodity at MSP in the notified markets during the notified period from the registered farmers in consonance with the PPSS Guidelines, whenever the prices in the market fall below the notified MSP and whenever authorized by the state/UT government to enter the market and maximum service charges up to 15% of the notified MSP will be payable.
- **Expenditure:** The Cabinet has decided to give additional government guarantee of Rs.16,550 crore making it Rs. 45,550 crore in total.
- **In addition** to this, budget provision for procurement operations has also been increased and Rs. 15,053 crore is sanctioned for PM-AASHA implementation. The scheme henceforth is a reflection of Government's commitment and dedication to our 'Annadata'.
- **Procurement over the years:** During financial years 2010-14 total procurement was Rs. 3500 crore only whereas during financial years 2014-18, it has risen 10 times and reached to Rs. 34,000 crore. For procurement of these agri-commodities during 2010-14, Government Guarantee of Rs. 2500 crore was provided with expenditure of only Rs. 300 crore; while during 2014-18, Guarantee amount has been increased to Rs. 29,000 crore with expenditure of Rs. 1,000 crore.
- **Details:** Government of India is working with the holistic approach of solving any issue rather than in fragments. Increasing MSP is not adequate and it is more important that farmers should get full benefit of the announced MSP. For this, government realizes that it is essential that if price of the agriculture produce market is less than MSP, then in that case State Government and Central Government should purchase either at MSP or work in a manner to provide MSP for the farmers through some other mechanism. With this approach, Cabinet has approved the Umbrella Scheme of PM-AASHA with three sub-schemes i.e. Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) and pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS).
- **In Price Support Scheme (PSS)**, physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and Copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies with proactive role of State governments. It is also decided that in addition to NAFED, Food Cooperation of India (FCI) will take up PSS operations in states /districts. The procurement expenditure and losses due to procurement will be borne by Central Government as per norms.
- **Under Price Deficiency Payment Scheme this scheme (PDPS)**, it is proposed to cover all oilseeds for which MSP is notified. In this direct payment of the difference between the MSP and the selling/modal price will be made to pre-registered farmers selling his produce in the notified market yard through a transparent auction process.
- **All payment** will be done directly into registered bank account of the farmer. This scheme does not involve any physical procurement of crops as farmers are paid the difference between the MSP price and Sale/modal price on disposal in notified market. The support of central government for PDPS will be given as per norms.

Pro-farmer initiatives of the Government:

- **The Government** is committed to realizing the vision of doubling farmers' income by 2022. The emphasis is on enhancing productivity, reducing cost of cultivation and strengthening post-harvesting management, including market structure. Several market reforms have been initiated. These include Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Act, 2017 and Model Contract Farming and Services Act, 2018. Many States have taken steps to adopt these through legislation.
- **Efforts** are on for a new market architecture, so as to ensure that farmers get remunerative prices on their produce. These include setting up of Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs) so as to promote 22,000 number of retail markets in close proximity of farm gate; competitive and transparent wholesale trade at APMC through eNAM and a robust and pro-farmer export policy.

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

Agricultural Marketing National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)

- **115 wholesale** regulated markets have been integrated with e-NAM platform to achieve the target of total 585 e-NAM markets in 16 States and 2 Union Territories.
- **The financial** assistance has been sanctioned for cleaning, grading, sorting and packaging facilities in 320 existing e-NAM mandis and for compost unit in 245 existing e-NAM mandis.
- **Rs. 137.33 crore** have been sanctioned for cleaning, grading, sorting and packaging facilities and compost unit.
- **Cabinet Committee** on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the proposal for integration of additional 415 wholesale regulated markets with e-NAM platform during 2018-20.

Venture Capital Assistance:

- **In order to encourage** Agri-prenures to set up Agri-based processing Units directly or indirectly benefiting the small and marginal farmers, SFAC has sanctioned VCA to 484 Projects amounting to Rs. 140.81 crores having Project Cost of Rs. 1631.25 crores during January to December 2018.
- **Formation of Farmer Producer Companies:** 22 Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) were formed and registered involving 22000 farmers during January to December 2018. As on 7.12.2018, total of 773 FPOs have been registered and 123 FPOs are under the process of registration.
- **Upgradation and development of rural haats as Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)** A survey of 9477 rural haats has been conducted through Directorate of Marketing & Inspection (DMI), an attached office under Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare, for finding the status of infrastructure, type of commodities etc. in rural haats for better formulation of strategy of developing of rural haats.
- **Proposal for creation** of Agri-market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF) of Rs. 2000 crore for developing marketing facilities in Gramin Agriculture Markets (GrAMs) has been approved by Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure). The proposal is being submitted to Cabinet Committee for Economic Affairs (CCEA) for approval.
- **DAC&FW has formulated** the operational guidelines for Operations and Management of Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), which has been approved by Hon'ble Union Agriculture Minister. The Operational Guidelines have been shared with all States/Union Territories as well as Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Panchyati Raj and Ministry of Tribal Affairs to guide them in operation and management of GrAMs.
- **Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure (AMI)** Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure (AMI), sub scheme of Integrated Scheme of Agricultural Marketing (ISAM), has been re-open w.e.f. 22.10.2018 for the period coterminous with the 14th Finance Commission i.e. upto 2019-20.

Model Contract Farming Act

- **In order to optimize** the use of scarce resources and mitigate the uncertainty in price and marketing, the Government has formulated and released a progressive and facilitative Model Act "The ---State/ UT Agricultural Produce & Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion & Facilitation) Act, 2018" in May, 2018 for its adoption by the states/Union Territories (UTs). The aforesaid Model Contract Farming Act covers the entire value and supply chain from pre-production to post harvest marketing including services contract for the agricultural produce and livestock.

- **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana** Based on the experience gained in implementation of the scheme over two years and with a view to ensure better transparency, accountability and timely payment of claims to the farmers, Government has comprehensively revised the Operational Guidelines of the scheme recently. These revised guidelines have come into effect from 1st October, 2018 i.e, from Rabi 2018-19 season. The brief features/changes in the revised OGS are as under:-
- **Provision of Penalties/Incentives for States**, ICs and Banks i.e, 12% interest rate per annum to be paid by the Insurance Company to farmers for delay in settlement claims beyond 10 days of prescribed cut off date for payment of claims.
- **Similarly, State Government** has to pay 12% interest rate for delay in release of State share of Subsidy beyond three months of prescribed cut off date/submission of requisition by Insurance Companies. Rationalization of methodology for calculation of Threshold Yield (TY) – Moving average of best 5 out of 7 years for calculation of claim amount.
- **Increased time for change** of crop name for insurance – upto 2 working days prior to cut-off date for enrolment instead of earlier provision of 1 month before cut off date. More time to insured farmers to intimate individual claims – 72 hours (instead of 48 hours) through any stakeholders and directly on the portal.
- **Inclusion of hailstorm in post harvest losses, besides unseasonal and cyclonic rainfall.** Inclusion of cloud burst and natural fire in localized calamities in addition to hailstorm, landslide and inundation. Detailed plan for publicity and awareness- earmarked expenditure – 0.5% of Gross premium per company per season.
- **Inclusion of Perennial horticultural crops (on pilot basis) under the ambit of PMFBY.** Use of Remote Sensing Technology (RST) in clustering/Risk classification.
- **The scheme** is in its third year of implementation and the Department has put a rigorous monitoring mechanism in place in form of weekly Video Conferencing with all stakeholders including States, Insurance Companies, Banks and other supporting agencies, issues based meetings with concerned stake holders including meetings of Technical Advisory Committee and meetings of National Level Monitoring Committee (NLMC) to ensure early settlement of claims under the scheme.

Agricultural Credit

- **Agriculture** is a dominant sector of our economy and credit plays an important role in increasing agriculture production. Availability and access to adequate, timely and low cost credit from institutional sources is of great importance especially to small and marginal farmers.
- **Along** with other inputs, credit is essential for establishing sustainable and profitable farming systems. Experience has shown that easy access to financial services at affordable cost positively affects the productivity, asset formation, and income and food security of the rural poor.
- **The Government of India** has initiated several policy measures to improve the accessibility of farmers to the institutional sources of credit.
- **The emphasis** of these policies has been on progressive institutionalization for providing timely and adequate credit support to all farmers with particular focus on small and marginal farmers and weaker sections of society to enable them to adopt modern technology and improved agricultural practices for increasing agricultural production and productivity.
- **These policy** measures have resulted in significant increase in the share of institutional credit. Every year, the GoI in the Union Budget, announces the ground level credit target for agriculture which banks have to achieve during the financial year

Interest Subvention Scheme

- **With a view to ensuring** availability of agriculture credit, the GoI had launched Interest Subvention scheme in the year 2006-07. As per the extant guidelines of GoI for the year 2017-18 and 2018-19, Interest Subvention of 2% per annum is provided to Public Sector Banks, Private Sector Banks (in respect of loans given by their rural and semi urban branches), Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks on their own funds used for short term crop loans upto Rs.3,00,000/- per farmer provided the lending institutions make available short-term credit at the ground level at 7% per annum to farmers.
- **In addition to above**, a scheme was introduced from 2009-10 for providing additional interest subvention to the prompt paying farmers wherein presently 3% Interest Subvention as an incentive to prompt payee farmers is given. This subvention is available to farmers on the short term production credit upto maximum amount of Rs.3.00 lakh availed during the year. Thus the prompt paying farmers are getting short term crop loans @4% per annum from various banks.

- **In order to discourage** distress sale by farmers and to encourage them instead to store their produce in warehouses, the benefit of interest subvention will be available to small and marginal farmers having Kisan Credit Card for a further period of upto six months after the harvesting of the crop at the same rate as available to crop loan against Negotiable Warehouse Receipts issued for the produce stored in warehouses accredited with Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority.
- **To provide relief to farmers** affected by natural calamities, an interest subvention of 2 per cent per annum will be made available to banks for the first year on the restructured loan amount. Such restructured loans will attract normal rate of interest from the second year onwards as per the policy laid down by the RBI.

Master directions on Natural Calamities:

- **The Reserve Bank of India** has put in place a mechanism to address situations arising out of natural calamities and has issued guidelines in the form of Master Directions to banks on 'Relief Measures by Banks in Areas affected by Natural Calamities'. These guidelines automatically come into force after the state/district authorities declare the calamity.
- **The conveners** are to ensure that District Consultative Committees (DCCs) and State Level Bankers' Committees (SLBCs) meeting are held at the earliest to evolve a coordinated action plan for implementation of the relief programme in collaboration with State/District Authorities.
- **The banks'** contribution in providing relief relates to rescheduling of existing loans and sanctioning of fresh loan. The precise details of credit assistance by the banks will depend on the requirements of the situation, their own operational capabilities and the actual needs of the borrowers.
- **The Bank** has also developed a portal to capture data on natural calamities on real time basis.
- **International Cooperation** Bilateral cooperation MoU signed: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare signed s for cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors between India and Iran on 17th February 2018 and with Uzbekistan on 1st October 2018. Towards the implementation of the existing , meetings of Joint Working Groups (JWG) were held with nine countries, namely, Portugal, Madagascar, Dutch, Poland, Denmark, Philippines, Nepal, Russia and Australia.
- **India-Nepal Cooperation** The inaugural meeting of the 'India-Nepal New Partnership in Agriculture' was held under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Hon'ble Agriculture Minister of Nepal on 19.6.2018 at New Delhi. Among areas of cooperation identified, India is assisting Nepal in developing organic farming and soil health cards with an expenditure of INR 432.397 lakh to be provided by India. Two training programmes on Organic Farming and Certification for 20 Nepalese participants each, is being organized by National Centre for Organic Farming (NCOF), Ghaziabad during 15th November, 2018 to 14th December, 2018 and 1st February, to 2nd March, 2019.

USAID

- **India is** collaborating with USAID to provide training for nationals of 20 Asian and African countries viz.Liberia, Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda from Africa and Afghanistan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Vietnam. 24 US-India-Africa Triangular International Training Programmes have been successfully completed during April to November 2018. Under this USAID funded project, 565 Executives from 20 countries have since been provided training.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** India officially joined SCO as full Member on 9 June 2017 at a summit in Astana. Accordingly this Ministry participated in the meeting of the SCO Permanent Working Group (PWG) on Agriculture and Agriculture Ministers' of SCO Member States held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan during 18-19 September 2018. A 7-point SCO Action Plan for 2018-2019 on the implementation of the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on cooperation in agriculture was signed.
- **International Events** 70th Anniversary of India-Russia Diplomatic relations: 70th Anniversary of India-Russia diplomatic relations in the field of Agriculture sector was celebrated during 13-14 February, 2018. During the event, an Indo-Russian Agriculture Business Summit, 2018 was held at New Delhi on 13.2.2018 and the main function was organised at Central State Farm(CSF) in Suratgarh, Rajasthan on 14.02.2018. Mr. Sergey O. Beletskiy, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Russia and Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister of State for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare were attended the event.

International Seminars/Workshops/Conferences etc.

- **During 2017-18** (upto December, 2017), this Department took part in 97 International Conferences/Meetings/ Seminars/Trainings etc. dealing with various aspects of agricultural development organized by the FAO and other International Organizations.
- **A proposal of Government of India** for celebrating an International Year of Millets by UN was endorsed by FAO Council for 2023. This would be placed in the FAO Conference in June 2019 before communicating to UN General Assembly for final declaration.
- **Report of the Committee** on Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 Submitted to The Commission The task of maintaining campaign silence during last 48 hours before the conclusion of polling is becoming increasingly onerous in the light of the increasing influence of digital media. So, apart from the regulation by law and ECI instructions, the resolve, proactive support and sustained effort by all stake holders which include political parties, media, civil society organizations, academia and educational institutions, the youth and citizens at large, will remain necessary to contain the evil impact.
- **The Committee constituted** under the chairmanship of Sr. Deputy Election Commissioner Sh. Umesh Sinha to review and suggest modifications and changes in the provisions of the Section 126 and other sections of the Representation of the People Act 1951, provisions of Model Code of Conduct and any other ECI instruction in this regard has submitted its report today i.e. on 10th January, 2019 to the Commission.
- **The Committee had the following scope of work:** Study and examine the present provisions of the Section 126 and other related Sections of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and identify difficulties/critical gaps to regulate the violation of the said provisions of the act, particularly during the prohibitory period of 48 hours before the completion of the poll, mentioned in section 126 and suggest necessary amendment/modification.
- **Examine the type**, category or growth of communication technology or media platform in the country and difficulties in regulating these media platforms during multiphase election when prohibitory period of 48 hours are in force.
- **Impact of new media** platforms and social media during the prohibitory period of 48 hours before the close of poll and its implication in view of the provisions of section 126.
- **Examine the present** provisions of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) related to the above issues and suggest modification in this regard.
- **The Committee set up by the Commission** included the representatives of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Ministry of Law & Justice, Press Council of India, News Broadcasters Association apart from senior officers of the Commission.
- **The Committee had detailed consultations** with all major stakeholders including various political parties, nominees/ representatives of the Press Council of India (PCI), the News Broadcasters Association (NBA), the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) as well as representatives of several intermediaries and technology companies including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, and Google. The Committee also had several rounds of discussions and consultations with the legal and other divisions within the ECI.
- **The recommendations made by the Committee**, when implemented (after adoption by the ECI with necessary modification or additions), will help in minimizing the possible interference of activities which aim at indirectly influencing voters during the valuable silence period of 48 hours provided to them. The recommendations of the Committee will be considered by the Commission in detail for follow up action.

The Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2018 Ministry:

- **The Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2018** was introduced in Rajya Sabha by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Mr. Jagat Prakash Nadda on December 31, 2018. The Bill seeks to regulate and standardise the education and practice of allied and healthcare professionals.
- **Allied health professional: The Bill defines** 'allied health professional' as an associate, technician, or technologist trained to support the diagnosis and treatment of any illness, disease, injury, or impairment. Such a professional is trained to support the implementation of any healthcare treatment recommended by a medical, nursing or any other healthcare professional. An allied health professional should obtain a diploma or degree, with a duration of at least 2,000 hours.
- **Healthcare professional: As per the Bill**, a 'healthcare professional' includes a scientist, therapist, or any other professional who studies, advises, researches, or provides preventive, curative, rehabilitative, therapeutic, or promotional health services. A healthcare professional should obtain a degree, with a duration of at least 3,600 hours.
- **Allied and healthcare professions:** The Bill specifies certain recognised categories of allied and healthcare professions in the Schedule. These include life science professionals, surgical and anaesthesia related technology professionals, trauma and burn care professionals, physiotherapists, and nutrition science professionals. The central government may amend this Schedule after consultation with the Allied and Healthcare Council.
- **Allied and Healthcare Council of India:** The Bill sets up the Allied and Healthcare Council of India. The Council will consist of 48[*] members, including: (i) six members (at the level of Joint Secretary) representing various Departments/ Ministries of the central government, (ii) one representative from the Directorate General of Health Services, (iii) two Directors or Medical Superintendents appointed on a rotational basis from amongst medical institutions including the AIIMS,

Delhi and JIPMER, Puducherry, (iv) three members appointed on a rotational basis from various Councils such as the Indian Nursing Council, and the Medical Council of India, and (v) 12 members representing State Councils.

- **Functions of the Allied and Healthcare Council:** Functions of the Council include: (i) framing policies for regulating the education and practice of allied and healthcare professionals, (ii) maintaining a Central Register of all registered allied and healthcare professionals, (iii) providing minimum standards of education, courses, maximum tuition fee, and proportionate distribution of seats, and (iv) providing for a uniform entrance and exit examination for the allied and healthcare professionals.
- **State Allied and Healthcare Councils:** Within six months from the passage of the Bill, state governments will constitute State Allied and Healthcare Councils. The State Councils will consist of 29 members, including: (i) one member representing medical sciences in the state government, (ii) two members representing state medical colleges, (iii) two members representing charitable institutions, and (iv) 20 members from recognised categories of allied and healthcare professions, nominated by the state government.
- **Functions of State Councils include:** (i) enforcing professional conduct and code of ethics to be observed by allied healthcare professionals, (ii) maintaining respective State Registers, (iii) registering and inspecting allied and healthcare institutions, and (iv) ensuring uniform entry and exit examinations.
- **Establishment of new institutions:** The Bill states that: (i) if any person wishes to establish an allied and healthcare institution, or (ii) if an established allied and healthcare institution wants to open new courses, or increase its admission capacity, or admit a new batch of students, it will have to seek prior permission from the Council. If the person or allied healthcare institution fails to seek such permission, then any qualification granted to a student from such an institution will not be recognised under the Bill.
- **The respective State Councils** will verify the standards of any allied and healthcare institution where education in the recognised categories is being imparted. If these institutions do not conform to the standards specified by the Council, the State Council may withdraw recognition granted to them.
- **Offences and penalties:** No person is allowed to practice as a qualified allied and healthcare practitioner other than those enrolled in a State Register or the National Register. Any person who contravenes this provision will be punished with a fine of one lakh rupees.



Year End Review 2018- Ministry of Human Resource Development - Samagra Shiksha - An Integrated Scheme for School Education

- **The Department of School Education & Literacy**, Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched an Integrated Scheme for School Education - Samagra Shiksha from 2018-19. Samagra Shiksha envisages 'school' as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels.
- **A total of Rs.30891.81 crore** has been provided for Samagra Shiksha in BE 2018-19. Out of Rs.30891.81 crore, an amount of Rs.19808.36 crore (64%) has been released to the States and UTs as Central share (as on 31.12.2018). Preference will be given to educationally backward Blocks (EBBs), Special Focus Districts (SFDs), Border areas and the Aspirational Districts identified by NITI Aayog.
- **Allocation for uniforms** has been enhanced from Rs.400 to 600 per child per annum and allocation for textbooks from Rs.150/250 to Rs.250/400 per child per annum. Energized textbooks have been introduced.

Library Grant under Samagra Shiksha (Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat)

- **In order to complement** the activities under Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat and inculcate the reading habits among students of all ages, strengthening of school libraries is being undertaken including provision of books by providing library grant for government schools, under the newly launched centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha from 2018-19.
- **For the first time** the provision for separate annual library grant has been made covering schools from Primary to Senior Secondary. Reading corners have been created to inculcate habit of reading among children. Library Grant of Rs.5,000 to Rs.20,000 has been provisioned from Primary to Senior Secondary Schools.
- **In the year 2018-19**, an outlay of Rs.47396.14 lakh is estimated under library grant for 702250 schools of different categories.

Sports Grant under Samagra Shiksha (Khele India Khile India)

- **Realizing the need** for holistic development of children, Samagra Shiksha has included the Sports and Physical Education component to each school under which sports grant is being provided for sports equipments for indoor & outdoor games.
- **Sports Education** has been an integral part of the curriculum. Provision has been made for sports equipment for indoor and outdoor games. Every school will receive sports equipments at the cost of Rs.5000 for Primary Schools, Rs.10,000 for Upper Primary Schools and up to Rs.25,000 for Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools to inculcate and emphasize relevance of sports.
- **In the year 2018-19**, an outlay of Rs.50690.37 lakh has been estimated under sports grant for 894307 schools of different categories.

Children with Special Needs (CWSN):

- **Stipend of Rs.200** per month for CWSN girls will be provided from Classes I to XII.
- **Earlier it was only** for Classes IX to XII. Allocation for Children with Special Needs (CWSN) has been increased from Rs.3000 to Rs.3500 per child per annum. In the year 2018-19, an outlay of Rs.102350.91 lakh has been estimated towards CWSN grants.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)

- **The scheme of Samagra Shiksha** has provision for existing KGBVs at upper primary level and Girls Hostels at secondary level to be extended/ converged to provide residential and schooling facilities upto Class-XII. This would provide the facility of at-least one residential school for girls from Classes VI-XII in every educationally backward block which does not have residential schools under any other Scheme.

Vocational Education

- **Vocational Education** is a scheme under the umbrella of 'Samagra Shiksha. The scheme seeks to integrate vocational education with general academic education with an aim to prepare educated, employable and competitive human resource for various sectors of the economy and the global market. The scheme covers Government schools and Government aided schools.
- **The scheme has a provision** for providing exposure to vocational education to students of Classes VI to VIII. Till date 9623 schools have been approved under the scheme including 1501 schools approved this year (2018-19). Out of 9623 schools approved, the scheme has so far been implemented in 7470 schools with current reported enrolment of 8,33,041 students.
- **NSQF compliant vocational courses** are taught to the students of class 9th to 12th. At the secondary level i.e. class 9th and 10th, vocational modules are offered to students as an additional subject. At Sr. Secondary level, i.e. class XI and XII, vocational courses are offered as a compulsory (elective) subject. Under the program, there is a provision for
- **arranging hands** - on training for students in industrial set up and guest lectures from industry. The State Governments have been advised that vocational education is to be treated at par with other academic subjects and accorded a similar status.

Learning Outcomes

- **The Learning Outcomes** document for elementary level has been developed in two forms. The complete document includes Curricular Expectations, Pedagogical Processes and Learning Outcomes of classes I to VIII. This document is meant for teachers and teacher educators and school administration to ensure and enhance the quality of learning in schools and the compact version contains only the learning outcomes for each subject in each class. 24 States and UTs (UTs without legislature and Jammu and Kashmir have adopted central rules mutatis mutandis) have incorporated the learning outcomes in their State rules.
- **NCERT adopted a block** named Ichhavar in Sihore district of MP with 190 primary and 100 upper primary schools to provide systematic inputs to enhance students' learning outcomes. After a base line survey, the inputs in respect of all pedagogical processes including use of kits and other material and Art Integrated Learning are in progress for the last one year.
- **Further five more blocks** in other regions (one each in South, East, North and two in North East) have been adopted by NCERT to implement the NCERT pedagogy and material for enhancement of learning outcomes. It has been planned to have longitudinal studies on the achievement of learning outcomes for both primary and upper primary classes.

- **NCERT conducted research** studies in six blocks of the country to enhance achievement of learning outcomes. The research studies will help i) to assess the age and development appropriateness of learning outcomes identified for each class ii) to assess adequacy of strategies and materials developed by NCERT in achievement of learning outcomes.
- **These research studies** in six blocks of the country have been undertaken to enhance achievement of learning outcomes. The research studies will help i) to assess the age and development appropriateness of learning outcomes identified for each class ii) to assess adequacy of strategies and materials developed by NCERT in achievement of learning outcomes.
- **It is also planned** to prepare interventions in Aspirational Districts in collaboration with the respective SCERTs and district administration to address the issue of Learning Outcomes including other Key Performance Indicators.
- **Learning Outcomes** for secondary stage are being developed by NCERT and will be shared after finalisation.

National Achievement Survey 2017-18

- **NAS assessed the learning** levels of the students in Classes 3, 5, 8 and 10, initially the District report cards were released and later the State Learning Reports were made available on the website for Classes 3,5 and 8 in May, 2018 and for Class 10 the State Learning Reports were available in the month of November, 2018. The following two are the links to the State Learning Reports.
- **The Post NAS Interventions** (2018-19) were initiated to reach out to all the Districts in the different States. The learning gaps identified were used to provide feedback to the districts. A framework of intervention to improve the quality of learning in the schools is being suggested. The designing and implementation of the interventions include in its ambit the school leaders, teachers and the whole network of officials at clusters, blocks, DIETs, SCERT and the Directorates of education in the different states/UTs.
- **Various medium term Post NAS** interventions have been initiated, which includes, sharing of findings of NAS with DIETs, BRCCs, and other stakeholders; orientation of BRCCs, CRCCs and teachers on evolving learning strategies to enhance learning outcomes at different grade levels; orientation of school leaders in use of assessment data to improve teaching learning in the States and UTs; facilitating teachers in using alternative instructional strategies to bridge the learning gaps with the support of State functionaries (SCERTs/ SIEs) and seeking support from community to improve the learning levels.
- **Post NAS interventions** have been initiated by NCERT in collaboration with the States of Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Tripura, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir and Goa.

Operation Digital Board

- **Operation Digital Board** (ODB) would provide Smart Classroom facility to all 101580 schools with secondary and senior secondary classes, over the next five years. All class rooms in these schools will have the facility, thereby enhancing digital penetration and aiding digital learning among students.
- **School based Assessment (Annual Achievement Survey)** In order to objectively assess the learning outcomes, this Department has already initiated the process of conducting the National Achievement Survey (NAS), which is an external evaluation, at regular intervals. The process has been developed after detailed and nuanced interactions with all the stakeholders. The results of the NAS held in 2017-18 are already available in the public domain.
- **Further, based on the evidence** gathered from the survey of 2.2 million students during the NAS conducted in 2017, and the subsequent targeted interventions by NCERT in a pilot survey for creating a framework to improve learning outcomes, it has been decided to conduct a School Based Assessment (SBA) in 2019, which would be a qualitative and non threatening evaluation process of the students by the respective schools.
- **These quantitative and qualitative** evaluation techniques, in tandem with the external evaluation, are crucial to ensure that the desired learning outcomes are reached. Both these evaluations are therefore essential and form a logical continuum.

Participation of India in Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA)

- **The Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA)** will be conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2021. PISA was launched by OECD in 1997, first administered in 2000 and now covers approximately 80 countries. The key features of PISA are as under:
 - **i. PISA is a triennial international survey** (every three years) which aims to evaluate the education system worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. ii. Students were assessed in reading, mathematics, science and collaborative problem-solving.
 - **iii. Within the country** (or specific geography to be covered), PISA covers a sample of 15-year-old students representing all forms of schooling i.e. public, private, private aided etc i.e. sample is derived from the entire population of 15-year-old school going children. iv. PISA, unlike content-based assessment, measures the extent to which students have acquired key competencies that are essential for full participation in modern societies.
 - **v. Participation in PISA** allows benchmarking performance against a wide range of countries. vi. PISA uses test items aligned with international benchmarks. Test items are adapted to the local context and language, pilot tested and validated before being used for the test.
- **India will participate** in PISA 2021 through schools run by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and the UT of Chandigarh. It was decided after due consideration that the computer-based testing mode would not be suitable for Indian students at this point in time and as of now the mode of testing would be paper-based. The preparations for PISA 2021 have been initiated. An International Treaty will be signed between MHRD and OECD for this purpose. The World Bank will be providing technical support as well as financial assistance to the tune of USD 5.6 million for all activities related to PISA.

Review of Syllabus and Textbooks of NCERT

- **The NCERT has undertaken** review of Syllabi and Textbooks developed by the NCERT as a follow up of the National Curriculum Framework-2005 in 2017-18. All the textbooks of NCERT developed as a follow-up of the NCF-2005 have been reviewed for updating. A portal for teachers' suggestions on the NCERT textbooks was created. Suggestions received from teachers were analysed and incorporated if found appropriate in this review. Further, national initiatives such as Clean India, Digital India, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Demonetization, etc., have also been given space in the reviewed textbooks in integrated manner. Data was updated in the light of Census 2011. Reviewed textbooks have been implemented for the year 2018-19.
- **Seven joint committees** drawing memberships from the NCERT, CBSE, NVS and KVS were constituted by the NCERT to discuss syllabus and textbooks at the secondary and senior secondary stages and the issues regarding assessment and examination. These committees were constituted as a follow up of the meeting held at the MHRD on 5th June 2017 and 5th July 2017 under the Chairpersonship of Secretary, School Education and Literacy, MHRD, in which two major recommendations were made- 1. CBSE will not publish any textbook henceforth. All the textbooks shall be published by the NCERT only and 2. Joint Committees to be constituted to discuss these issues further.
- **Joint committees held** their meetings from September-November, 2017 and the minutes of the meetings were shared with all the participating organisations for further actions. As a follow-up of the meetings of these joint committees, NCERT has taken initiative to develop workbooks in English and Sanskrit for classes IX and X and also development and updating of syllabi and textbooks for Computer Science (XI-XII), Information and Communication Technology (IX-XII) and Informatics Practices (XI-XII) as well as Biotechnology (XI-XII).
- **In 2018-19, as per the advice** of MHRD, the NCERT has again undertaken review of its textbooks under the initiative of Rationalisation of Curriculum. In this regard, MHRD invited suggestions from different stakeholders. Received suggestions were analysed by the NCERT's faculty members along with experts from different institutions. Now, NCERT is in the process of finalizing its textbooks for 2019-20 including QR codes in each of the textbook titles.

NCERT to distribute over 6 crore textbooks

- **NCERT launched a portal** in August, 2017 to facilitate individuals, schools, States and UTs to directly purchase textbooks. NCERT printed 4.15 crore textbooks by June, 2014 for the session 2014-15, 4.17 crore textbooks by June, 2015 for the session 2015-16, 4.35 crore textbooks by June, 2016 for the session 2016-17, 4.63 crore textbooks by June, 2017 for the session 2017-18, and 5.91 crore textbooks by June, 2018 for the session 2018-19.
- **It is expected** that NCERT will be able to print 6.03 crore textbooks by June, 2019 for the session 2019-20. Textbooks will be distributed through four Regional Production-cum-Distribution Centres already established at Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Guwahati and Kolkata apart from Delhi. NCERT has also empanelled 895 vendors across the country for distribution of textbooks.

e-Pathshala

- **NCERT books are available** free in digital version. 15 lakh students have downloaded the e-pathshala app. Visits in one year has crossed 30 million mark.
- **UDISE+ (UDISE plus)** The Unified District Information on School Education (UDISE) collects data on all schools in the country. From 2018-19, it has been decided to update the UDISE and introduce new features. The UDISE+ (i.e., UDISE Plus) application will be online and will gradually move towards collecting real-time data. UDISE+ application, in addition to data collection, will have the following features: a) A Dashboard with data analytics and data visualization will be developed. It will include time series data to study the trend over years and monitor growth. Progress in Key Performance indicators will be tracked.
- **b) The system will be linked to GIS mapping and School Report Cards will be generated.** c) To ensure data quality, a separate module for third party verification will be developed including a mobile app. The process of data collection will start in January, 2019.

Performance Grading Index (PGI)

- **The PGI** is for the purpose of grading States and UTs on their performance across 70 indicators on school education.
- **The Index** will grade States and UTs thus allowing for more than one State/UT to occupy the same grade, and therefore all 36 States and UTs to ultimately reach the highest level. The PGI has been conceptualised as a tool to encourage States and UTs to adopt certain practices like online recruitment and transfer of Teachers, electronic attendance of Students & Teachers etc.
- **The PGI** has seventy (70) indicators divided into two categories viz Outcomes and Governance processes. The first category is divided into four domains viz. Learning outcomes, Access outcomes, Infrastructure and Facilities and Equity outcomes; the second category is about Governance processes which covers attendance, teacher adequacy, administrative adequacy, training, accountability and transparency.
- **The total weightage under PGI** is thousand points. Each indicator has been given either twenty or ten points.
- **The data for the year 2017-18** has been received and compiled for all the State/UTs and final grading has been done after third party verification of data by UNICEF. The Index will be officially released shortly.

Shagun Portal

- **On 18th January 2017**, the Hon'ble Minister for Human Resource Development launched the Shagun portal – www.seshagun.nic.in. It has two modules – (1) Repository of innovation and (2) Online monitoring.
- **Repository: This repository** of good practices focuses on positive stories and developments that are driving performance improvements in school education. These innovative practices are documented in the form of case studies, videos, testimonials and images.
- **This digital platform** is for public, media, stakeholders, influencers and global academia to witness the innovative ideas and success stories being registered in the field of elementary education. Innovations that have benefited State Governments, public schools, teachers and students are documented and disseminated through this repository. In the Shagun Repository, there are 277 videos on best practices, 266 case studies, 151 testimonials and 4537 photographs.
- **In the year 2018-19**, the department decided to expand the repository by covering all the schemes of the department and activities of various autonomous bodies such as NCERT, NIEPA, CBSE, NCTE, NIOS, KVS, NVS and National Bal Bhawan (NBB).
- **Monitoring: The online** monitoring module of Shagun measures state-level performance and progress against key educational indicators which enables DSEL and education departments of State and UTs to conduct real-time assessments.
- **The main functions are fund** utilisation tracking, performance measurement on key educational indicators, online planning & goal setting, physical targets and outcomes monitoring.

- **The portal offers data analytics** and generates graphics which represent the progress of States and UTs against key identified parameters such as exact number of out of school children mainstreamed, the increase or decrease in enrolment in government schools vis-à-vis private schools, expenditure on increasing the learning outcomes, and teachers' salaries.
- **Shagunotsav In a major initiative**, all Government schools throughout the country will be visited and checked during August-September, 2019. The Shagunotsav will focus primarily on infrastructure and facilities in all schools and this will be mapped online. The feedback will be used to verify the UDISE + data-base and certain indicators under the Performance Grading Index.

National Awards to Teachers

- **These Awards were instituted** in 1958. From the mid-1960s, 5th September came to be the fixed date for the function on account of birthday of Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, former President of India. Over the years, the number of awards increased to 378 awards, but it was felt that the Awards were losing their stature.
- **The guidelines of the scheme** were revised in the year 2018 along the pattern of the changes made in major national awards. The new scheme is transparent, fair, and rewards demonstrated excellence and performance.
- **The features of the new scheme are as under:** Online self-nominations from teachers were invited on www.mhrd.gov.in. The Web portal was developed by the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) and the entire software ran smoothly without any glitches or complaints. About 6000 applications were received from teachers from all over the country clearly indicating that the initiative was successful.
- **All regular teachers** were eligible and no minimum years of service was required. This enabled meritorious young teachers to apply. The number of awards was rationalized to 45, thereby restoring the prestige of the awards.
- **No State, UT or Organization** had a quota in the final selection. This encouraged them to compete for the awards. An independent Jury at the National level made the final selection. The Jury reviewed the list of 152 candidates forwarded by all States, UTs and Organisations. Each nominee made a presentation before the Jury, which made a final assessment and recommended 45 names for the Teachers Awards.

Awarding cleanest schools under Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar

- **The Department of School Education & Literacy** instituted Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar (SVP) in 2016-17 at District, State and National level as a next step to Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative. These awards are given to ensure long term sustainability and behaviour change towards cleanliness in schools. Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar is an initiative to recognize, inspire and celebrate excellence in water, sanitation and hygiene practices in schools. The schools voluntarily applied online through a website and mobile App for the awards. Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar 2017-18 was open to Private schools besides Government and Government aided schools.
- **Methodology for the awards** Selection of schools for the awards is made on the basis of scores obtained by them in five sub-categories, namely (i) Water, (ii) Toilet, (iii) Hand washing with Soap, (iv) Operations and Maintenance, (v) Behaviour Change and Capacity Building. The best schools selected for the National award are given a cash prize of Rs. 50,000/- as an additional school grant for sustaining and improving sanitation and hygiene conditions in the school, alongwith a Certificate of Recognition. The best States and top Districts which participated in the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar are also recognised.
- **Swachh Vidyalaya Praskhar 2017-18** SVP 2017-18 received overwhelming response from schools. 6,15,152 schools registered online for the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar 2017-18, which is more than double the number of schools which participated in the previous year. States and UTs shortlisted 727 schools for consideration of the National level awards.
- **After cross validation** and thorough screening top 52 schools were conferred the National Awards for SVP 2017-18. The top 4 States viz. Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh and the best 9 districts viz. Pondicherry, Srikakulam, Chandigarh, Hisar, Karaikal, Latur, Nellore, South Goa and Vadodara, were given the certificates of recognition during the function held on 18.9.2018.

Rangotsav

- **Cultural activities** including art, music, dance and theatre play a very critical role in a student's life and school activities. The National Curriculum Framework emphasized the importance of such activities and how they helped to enhance learning.
- **A fortnight of cultural** activities for both students and teachers was conducted concluding on 21st December, 2018. Titled Rangotsav, it comprised activities at the school level, culminating in national level events including the following -

Kala Utsav

- **Kala Utsav is an initiative of DSE&L, MHRD** to promote arts in education by nurturing and showcasing the artistic talent of school students of government and government aided schools at the secondary stage (Class IX-XII) of education in the country. The event was organised at New Delhi from 12-14 December 2018. 'Kala Utsav' focuses on both performing and visual arts & crafts (dance, music, theatre, painting, sculpture and heritage crafts) at school, district and State level, to enhance awareness of India's cultural heritage and its vibrant diversity amongst students, teachers, teacher educators, administrators and other stakeholders and aims to promote networking of artists and artisans with school education.
- **Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat - National Level Camp** Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan organized Rashtriya Ekta Shivir- Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat from 31st October – 2nd November, 2018 in New Delhi.
- **A total number of 1600** students and 175 escort teachers of Kendriya Vidyalayas from all the 25 Regions participated in the National Level camp. Following competitions were conducted during KVS "Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat-2018":
- **Group song, group dance** (state & international), theatre, on spot painting, solo singing, solo classical dance and display of artefacts Debates (Hindi & English), quiz, Sanskrit shloka recitation, Hindi kavya paath, English elocution, creative writing, spell-bee

Pariksha Pe Charcha

- **Prime Minister's** Interaction Programme with school and college students "Pariksha Pe Charcha" was held at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi on 16th February, 2018.
- **This program was a 'Town Hall'** event which was unique in itself and was planned for the first time wherein Hon'ble Prime Minister was interacting Live with school and college students in the Stadium and through Web Interaction across the Country. Written questions were invited from the students across the country for the interaction programme on MyGov platform. About 18,000 written questions were received out of which 40 questions were first shortlisted. Thereafter, Doordarshan was requested to video shoot these shortlisted questions and a few students from IIT Mumbai, BHU, etc prepared their own video of the question and sent it to MHRD. The final questions were then decided keeping in view the topic for the interaction.
- **Students from all over** the country from class VI to XII and those in higher educational institutions were requested to see/hear the broadcast on Doordarshan (DD National, DD News, DD India)/on radio channels (All India Radio Medium Wave, All India Radio FM Channel). 2500 students from various schools and colleges along with teachers and principals were invited to attend the live interaction at Talkatora Stadium. Accordingly, instructions and advisories were issued to all government and aided schools and government run higher education institutions to make necessary arrangements so that students can view the program. Necessary advisories were also issued to private schools and institutions.
- **The Pariksha Pe Charcha** Programme was planned as a one hour interaction of Hon'ble PM, continued for nearly two hours. There were more than 2500 students from schools and colleges who were present in Talkatora Stadium of 16th February, 2018 for the interaction and more than 8.5 Crore students from across the country viewed or heard the programme on DD/TV Channels/ Radio Channels.
- **The programme was widely** covered by print and electronic media. As per media reports, the interaction programme, became a raging hit on social media, and was the No. 1 trend conversation, which got more than 2.5 billion impression on twitter. It was widely viewed on Youtube, Facebook Live, through webcasting, etc.

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)

- **Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)** is an examination conducting body under administrative control of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and affiliates schools for conduct of the Class X and XII Examination. The Board has 10 Regional Offices and more than 21000 affiliated schools.
- **Affiliation The Board has developed and implemented** online software for affiliation process from 2018-19 session. Now, the application for affiliation from the submission to the final grant has been integrated with electronic communication and is completely transparent. The stakeholder can now keep track of his application at every stage.
- **The Affiliation bye-laws** have been completely revamped to ensure speed, transparency, hassle-free procedures and ease of doing business with CBSE. The Hon'ble Minister for HRD released the new CBSE Affiliation bye-laws at a press conference highlighting the main changes.
- **Examination Reforms** Exemption/concessions being extended to Persons with Benchmark Disabilities as per the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 have been complied and also the schedule for making requests to avail facilities/exemptions circulated vide Circular dated 26.09.2018 and 05.11.2018. The Board has notified the policy for facilitation of Children with Special Needs (CWSN).
- **Revised guidelines** have been formulated for fixing schools as examination centres. More choices have been provided in question papers. OASIS has been introduced as a single window solution for many examinations related activities.
- **The Board has successfully** implemented the pilot project for delivering of encrypted question papers in the Compartment 2018 examinations for Class X & XII.

National Curriculum Framework

- **Board** has recently issued a circular No. Acad 25/2018 dated 13.08.2018 to all affiliated schools, on adherence to the provision of National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 with regard to curriculum load, no homework to students upto Class II as prescribed by NCERT and reduction in the weight of school bags.

National Testing Agency

- **§ National Testing Agency (NTA)** has been established as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct all entrance examinations for higher education institutions in the country.
- **§ NTA has already** successfully conducted its first online exam for SWAYAM in December first week for about 3800 learners.
- **§ UGC/ NET examination** has also been successfully conducted by NTA on 18.12.2018. About 9.5 lakhs post graduate level students took this examination. The JEE examination in January 2019 will also be conducted by NTA for about 9.5 lakh students.
- **§ Improving Gender Balance:** With a view to improving female enrolment in the B.Tech Programmes in IITs, a Committee under the chairmanship of Director, IIT-Mandi was constituted by the Joint Admission Board (JAB) to suggest suitable measures. The recommendations of the Committee were considered by the IIT Council in its 51st meeting held on 28.04.2017 and decided to increase female enrolment from the current 8% to 14% in 2018-19, 17% in 2019-20 and 20% in 2020-21 by creating supernumerary seats.

Prime Minister Research Fellows:-

- **With a view** to tap the talent pool of the country for carrying out research in digeneously in cutting edge science and technology, MHRD has launched a Scheme called 'Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) for a period of seven years beginning 2018-19 with the approval of Cabinet. 135 students have been selected for PMRF DURING THE YEAR 2018.

- **With effect from 2019**, B.Tech./M.Tech students from any recognised Indian institution will be offered direct admission in PhD programme in the IITs/IISc. Such students, who fulfill the eligibility criteria, and shortlisted through a selection process, as laid down in the PMRF Guidelines, will be offered a fellowship of Rs.70,000/- per month for the first two years, Rs.75,000/- per month for the 3rd year, and Rs.80,000/- per month in the 4th and 5th years.
- **Apart from this**, a research grant of Rs.2.00 lakh will be provided to each of the Fellows for a period of 5 years to cover their foreign travel expenses for presenting research papers in international conferences and seminars. A maximum of 3000 Fellows would be selected in a three year period.

Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA):

- **This is implemented** under the initiative of "Revitalising Infrastructure & Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022
- **HEFA will provide Rs 1,00,000** crore in next 4 years Till now about Rs.12700 crore of loan has already been sanctioned. HEFA is also being used by Ministry of Health for funding of construction of four AIIMS. Loan have already been sanctioned to AIIMS Gorakhpur and AIIMS Bhatinda (Punjab).
- **§ Scheme for Promotion of Research Collaboration (SPARC)** – In order to facilitate research and academic collaboration with top academic institutions in the world, it has been decided that Government will fund such collaboration between Indian institutions which are in top 100 of either subject specific NIRF ranking or aggregate NIRF ranking on one hand and with foreign institutions figuring in top 500 QS world ranking.
- **About 800 proposals** have already been received (last date 7.12.2018). Some of the foreign educational institutions who have already applied for joint collaboration are MIT, Harvard, London School of Economics, National Technological University Singapore, National University of Singapore, University of Cambridge etc.

STARS (Scheme for Transformational and Advanced Research in Sciences) –

- **This scheme** has been initiated for accelerating inter-disciplinary and transformative research in the field of science by allowing educational institutions in the hinterland to collaborate with established research centres in science.
- **Coordinated by IISc Bangalore**, STARS aims at making available high end research funding in the field of science to researchers in small educational institutions. Rs.487 crore is earmarked for this.
- **§ Innovation Cell and Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)** – Innovation cell is MHRD's initiative and has been established at AICTE premises with a purpose to systematically foster the culture of Innovation in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country.
- **For the real outcome** there has to be some assessment of what is being done to promote innovation. Therefore, Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) has also been launched. It will encourage healthy competitiveness among Higher Educational Institutions.
- **§ Swachh Bharat Summer Internship** The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in association with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, has come up with the innovative 'Swachh Bharat Summer Internship (SBSI) 2018' aimed at engaging the college youth with Swachhata work in villages in the Summer vacation. 2 lakh students enrolled Students spend 100 hours in a village where he or she will work with people of the village to make it clean
- **§ Revamp in technical education** – To develop analytical understanding and to acquire a holistic perception of the subjects being taught, the technical examination system has been revamped with less emphasis on rote learning. Internship has been made mandatory for Diploma and Degree engineering students so that they have exposure to industry practise for the pass out.

§ Unnat Bharat Abhiyan & Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0

- **Every institution adopts 5 villages** Use of knowledge for social, economic growth Technical institutions design technical solutions for local issues

- **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA)** 2.0-a flagship program of MHRD, 688 institutions are selected on a Challenge Mode (426 technical and 262 non- technical) which are reputed Higher Educational Institutes (both public and private) of the country, which have adopted total no. of 3555 villages for their development through UBA

Smart India Hackathon

- **§ A unique IT Initiative** under which students are encouraged to apply knowledge to the real life situations and to find innovative solutions to the day to day problems
- **§ Smart India Hackathon 2018** (SIH 2018) was launched on 16th October 2017. It includes 2 sub-editions – Software as well as Hardware: Software Edition- 36-hour software product development competition, similar in concept to SIH 2017.
- **In the new Hardware Edition** of the Hackathon, the teams work for 5 consecutive days and build their hardware solutions for the proposed problem statements. The Grand Finale of Software Edition SIH 2018 was held on 30th & 31st March, 2018. The SIH 2019 is going to invite real life problems from industry as well. Advertisement for applications for SIH 2019 has already been placed in newspaper on 04.12.2018.
- **SIH 2019 aims at developing** software and hardware solutions to industrial problems. To sustain these initiatives, good and innovative solutions will be handed over to the incubation cell of the institute where angel investors can financially support commercially viable innovations.

National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)

- **§ 3rd successful year of competing excellence & ranking** § Has become a benchmark of quality and creates competitive spirit among the institutes
- **§ Shri Prakash Javadekar**, released the NIRF India Rankings 2018 in various categories on the basis of performance of Higher Educational Institutions in April 2018.
- **§ A total of 2809** institutions have participated in 9 categories. Collectively they have submitted 3954 distinct profiles, some in multiple disciplines/categories. This includes 301 Universities, 906 Engineering Institutions, 487 Management Institutions, 286 Pharmacy Institutions, 71 Law Institutions, 101 Medical Institutions, 59 Architecture Institutions and 1087 General Degree Colleges. 69 top institutions in 9 categories were given awards. This year also saw the beginning of limited ranking of institutions in new areas like Medicine, Law and Architecture.

Study in India

- **Government of India launched the Study in India program on 18th April, 2018 in New Delhi.** Students from 30 countries across South Asia, Africa, CIS and Middle East can apply for different courses from 160 select Indian institutions (both public & private) which are high on NAAC and NIRF ranking
- **It will improve the global ranking of Indian Institutions** Study in India program has taken off well and nearly 2000 students have got admission in selected 100 top Indian Institutions for the first season.
- **RESEARCH & QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION** AICTE has released a sum of Rs. 11.77 Crore under Research Promotional Scheme in the current Financial Year. The scheme aims at promoting research in engineering sciences and innovations in established and newer technologies; and to generate Master's and Doctoral degree candidates to augment the quality of faculty and research. Under Modernisation and Removal of Obsolescence (MODROBS), AICTE has granted a sum of Rs. 16 Crore in the present financial year to the institutes for removing obsolescence in laboratories, workshops, etc.
- **5 New Research Parks** at IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati, IIT Kanpur, IIT Hyderabad and IISc Bangalore @ Rs.75 crore each approved.
- **National Digital Library (NDL)** With the Government's commitment towards "Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat" the Union Human Resource Development Minister, Shri Prakash Javadekar launched the new digital initiative of HRD Ministry 'National Digital Library of India' on the occasion of National Reading Day i.e. 19th June, 2018.

- **This National Digital Library** of India (NDLI) is a project of the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the aegis of National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT)
- **1.9 Crore e-books and documents are available.** Content is available in English, Hindi and about 200 other languages. There are 160 Content contributor. There are 30 lakh users 9 thousand educational institutions from where users registered

Impactful Policy Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS)

- **The Union Minister** for Human Resource Development Shri Prakash Javadekar launched the web portal of the Scheme "Impactful Policy Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS)" in New Delhi on 25th October, 2018.
- **Under the Scheme, 1500** research projects will be awarded for 2 years to support the social science research in the higher educational institutions and to enable research to guide policy making.
- **In August 2018**, Government sanctioned the scheme "Impactful Policy Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS)" at a total cost of Rs.414 Cr for implementation up to 31.3.2021 and Indian Council of Social Science and Research (ICSSR) will be the project implementing agency.
- **The broad objectives of the scheme are:** To identify and fund research proposals in social sciences with maximum impact on the governance and society.
- **To focus research** on (11) broad thematic areas such as : State and Democracy, Urban transformation, Media, Culture and Society, Employment, Skills and Rural transformation, Governance, Innovation and Public Policy, Growth, Macro-trade and Economic Policy, Agriculture and Rural Development, Health and Environment, Science and Education, Social Media and Technology, Politics, Law and Economics. The Sub-Theme areas will be decided on the basis of Expert Groups' advice before notifying the scheme and calling for applications. To ensure selection of projects through a transparent, competitive process on online mode.
- **To provide opportunity** for social science researchers in any institution in the country, including all Universities (Central and State), private institutions with 12(B) status conferred by UGC. ICSSR funded/recognised research institutes will also be eligible to submit research proposals on the given themes and sub-themes.

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

- **The Ministry of HRD** has embarked on a major and new initiative called 'Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds' (SWAYAM), which will provide one integrated platform and portal for online courses, using information and communication technology (ICT) and covering all higher education subjects and skill sector courses.
- **Till date, more than 72 Lakhs** learners have been enrolled in more than 16000+ MOOCs courses that have been run through SWAYAM. 2 lakh persons have completed the courses.
- **MOOCs is also now being** used to train teachers through Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT). 42000 teachers have already registered for their annual refresher course. NIOS is one of the National Coordinator of SWAYAM. NIOS is offering 14 secondary level courses and all courses of Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed).
- **Scholarships** As per the record maintained by AICTE, a sum of Rs. 292.50 Crore (approx.) has been released to 11,862 GATE qualified M. Tech. students. In addition, Rs. 2.61 Lakh have been released under National Doctoral Fellowship Scheme. Overall, a sum of Rs. 1076 Crore have been released to GATE qualified M. Tech. Students in the last three year

Leadership for Academicians Program (LEAP) and Annual Refresher Programme In Teaching (ARPIT) for higher education faculty

- **Ministry of Human Resource Development**, launched two new initiatives; Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP) and Annual Refresher Programme In Teaching (ARPIT) on 13.11.2018 for Higher Education Faculty
- **Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP)** is a three weeks Flagship leadership development training programme (2 weeks domestic and one week foreign training) for second level academic functionaries in public funded higher education institutions. The main objective is to prepare second tier academic heads who are potentially likely to assume leadership roles in the future.
- **Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT)**, a major and unique initiative of online professional development of 15 lakh higher education faculty using the MOOCs platform SWAYAM. For implementing ARPIT, 75 discipline-specific institutions have been identified and notified as National Resource Centres (NRCs) in the first phase, which are tasked to prepare online training material with focus on latest developments in the discipline, new & emerging trends, pedagogical improvements and methodologies for transacting revised curriculum.

INDIA SURVEY ON HIGHER EDUCATION

- **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)** was initiated in 2011 in which data for the year 2010-11 were collected. The survey was utmost necessary as none of the sources of data on Higher education gave a complete picture of higher education in the country. Also, there were many important parameters on which data were required for policy making but either no data was available or incomplete data was available.
- **AISHE 2017-18, Survey covers** all institutions of Higher Education in the country, registered with AISHE code in AISHE portal www.aishe.gov.in.
- **Institutions are categorized** in 3 broad Categories; University, College and Stand-Alone Institutions. There are 903 Universities, 39050 Colleges and 10011 Stand Alone Institutions listed on AISHE web portal and out of them 882 Universities, 38061 Colleges and 9090 Stand Alone Institutions have responded during the survey.
- **In AISHE-2018 report total enrolment** in higher education has been estimated to be 36.6 million with 19.2 million boys and 17.4 million girls. Girls constitute 47.6% of the total enrolment. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 25.8%, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for male population is 26.3% and for females, it is 25.4%. For Scheduled Castes, it is 21.8% and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 15.9% as compared to the national GER of 25.8%.
- **Final report for the AISHE 2010-11 to 2017-18** are available on MHRD website. Survey for the year 2017-18 has been completed and AISHE 2018-19 Survey has been launched and last date to upload data is 28th February 2019

SWACHHTA PAKHWADA

- **§ An exercise called 'Swachhta Rankings'** of Higher Educational Institutions were held on 1st October 2018. Best 51 higher educational institutions have been selected for Swachhata Ranking Awards in 8 different categories.
- **§ This year Online submission** of details sought from HEIs, 6029 institutions applied, 205 institutions shortlisted based on cut-off. AICTE & UGC inspected all 205 institutions. Best 51 institutions selected in 8 categories:
- **Universities (Residential & Non-Residential) § Colleges (Residential & Non-Residential) § Technical Institutions (Universities – Residential) § Technical Colleges (Residential & Non-Residential) § Government Universities**

RESEARCH PARKS

- **Government** has approved setting up of 9 Research Parks one each at IIT Madras, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Bombay, IIT Gandhinagar, IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati, IIT Kanpur, IIT Hyderabad, and IISc Bangalore. IIT Madras Research Park, which is fully functional with 43 R&D clients, 4 Incubators, 55 Startups, and 5 Centres of Excellence was established at a total cost of Rs. 447.66 crore, which includes grants-in-aid of Rs.137 crore from the Government. The Research parks at IIT Kharagpur and IIT Bombay are under construction at a cost of Rs.100 crore each, out of which a sum of Rs.100 crore has been released to IIT Kharagpur and Rs.33 crore to IIT Bombay.
- **IIT Gandhinagar** Research Park currently under construction has been approved at a cost of Rs.90 crore with full funding from the Department of Science & Technology, which has released a sum of Rs.40 crore as on date.
- **Remaining Five** new Research Parks at IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati, IIT Kanpur, IIT Hyderabad, and IISc Bangalore at a total cost of Rs.75.00 crore each have been approved by the Government.

IMPRINT INDIA

- **§ IMPRINT initiative** was launched by the President, Prime Minister and the Human Resource Development Minister in November, 2015 to channelize the research in premier institutions into areas that can have largest social and economic good for the country.
- **§ Under this initiative**, research projects under 10 selected domains are jointly funded by MHRD and other participating Ministries/Departments. These domains are: health care, energy, sustainable habitat, nano technology hardware, water resources and river systems, advanced materials, information and communication technology, manufacturing, security and defence, and environmental science and climate change.
- **§ 142 research projects** with an outlay of Rs. 323.16 crore for 3 years with joint funding from MHRD and participating Ministries in the ratio of 50:50 have been approved and currently under execution under IMPRINT-I.
- **§ IMPRINT-II** has now been launched as a corpus jointly set up by M/o HRD and Deptt. Science & Technology as well as contribution from various other ministries. The scheme is opened to all CFTIs and CUs as principal investigator (PIs) while other institutions including private institutions can participate as joint PI. The average cost of each proposal will be about Rs. 2 crore with a duration of 3 years. An outlay of Rs. 335 cr each from MHRD and DST share has been approved. Thus, the dedicated corpus is Rs. 670 cr for Imprint II.
- **§ Under IMPRINT-II**, 122 projects totaling Rs. 112 cr has been approved. Further, under IMPRINT-II, specific challenges are being called from different ministries. Solution of these will be funded by IMPRINT-II.

UCHCHTAR AAVISHKAR ABHIYAAN

- **§ The scheme** was launched to promote industry-specific need-based research so as to keep up the competitiveness of the Indian industry in the global market. All the IITs have been encouraged to work with the industry to identify areas where innovation is required and come up with solutions that could be brought up to the commercialization level.
- **§ Under the UAY**, it is proposed to invest Rs. 250 crores every year on identified projects proposed by IITs, provided the Industry contributes 25% of the project cost. For the year 2016-17, (92) projects for Rs. 285.15 crore have been approved for implementation.
- **§ IIT Madras** is the National Coordinator of the scheme. (160) proposals have been received of which industry has agreed to contribute Rs. 156 Cr, making this one of the biggest ever industry-academia partnership. These research projects are expected to result in registration of patents.

Other Initiatives

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

- **§ UGC (Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2017** have been notified to create a distinct category of Deemed to be Universities, called Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities, which would be regulated differently from other Deemed to be Universities so as to evolve into Institutions of world class in reasonable time period. Also, in order to assist Indian Higher Education Institutions to get a rank within the top 100 in globally renowned rankings, accordingly The Government has shortlisted Six Institutions of Eminence (IoEs) including 3 from Public Sector and 3 from Private Sector. An Empowered Expert Committee (EEC) in its report recommended selection of 6 institutions (3 from public sector and 3 from private sector) as Institutions of Eminence. The details of these Institutions are as under:
- **§ Public Sector:** (i) Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Karnataka; (ii) Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, Maharashtra; and (iii) Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. **§ Private Sector:** (i) Jio Institute (Reliance Foundation), Pune under Green Field Category; (ii) Birla Institute of Technology & Sciences, Pilani, Rajasthan; and (iii) Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka.
- **§ Government Institutions** will get financial assistance of 1000 crores over a period of five years in addition to the grant already being received. The institutions selected from the private sector will have complete autonomy to promote innovation and creativity expected to result in producing competent graduates for the development of the country.

GST Council

- **Measures announced:** The annual turnover limit under which companies would be exempt from GST has been raised to ₹40 lakh for most States and ₹20 lakh for the North Eastern and hill states, from the earlier limit of ₹20 lakh and ₹10 lakh, respectively.
- **The limit for eligibility** for the Composition Scheme is raised to an annual turnover of ₹1.5 crore from April 1, 2019. So far, only manufacturers and traders were eligible for this scheme. The Scheme now has been extended to small service providers with an annual turnover of up to ₹50 lakh, at a tax rate of 6%.
- **Kerala can levy** a cess of up to 1% for up to two years on intra-State supplies to help finance the disaster relief efforts following the recent floods in the state.
- **Implications and outcomes of these measures:** A very large part of GST revenue comes from the formal sector and large companies. These measures have been taken to help the small and medium companies. The revenue impact due to these will be minimal. Allowing disaster cess of 1% to be introduced in the State of Kerala on local supplies may be an administrative issue for both businesses and government and this may set a precedence for other States to demand additional levy. Increasing the GST threshold limit would allow about 10 lakh traders to be exempt from the compliance burden of GST, and increasing the Composition Scheme limit would benefit about 20 lakh small businesses that fall between the annual turnover brackets of ₹1 crore and ₹1.5 crore.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The Composition Scheme currently allows companies with an annual turnover of up to ₹1 crore to opt for it, and file returns on a quarterly basis at a nominal rate of 1%
- **Why do we need a GST Council?** The GST council is the key decision-making body that will take all important decisions regarding the GST. The GST Council dictates tax rate, tax exemption, the due date of forms, tax laws, and tax deadlines, keeping in mind special rates and provisions for some states. The predominant responsibility of the GST Council is to ensure to have one uniform tax rate for goods and services across the nation.
- **How is the GST Council structured?** The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is governed by the GST Council. Article 279 (1) of the amended Indian Constitution states that the GST Council has to be constituted by the President within 60 days of the commencement of the Article 279A.
- **According to the article**, GST Council will be a joint forum for the Centre and the States. It consists of the following members: The Union Finance Minister will be the Chairperson As a member, the Union Minister of State will be in charge of Revenue of Finance The Minister in charge of finance or taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State government, as members.
- **GST Council recommendations:** Article 279A (4) specifies that the Council will make recommendations to the Union and the States on the important issues related to GST, such as, the goods and services will be subject or exempted from the Goods and Services Tax.

Henley Passport Index

- **Background:** The Henley Passport Index (HPI) is a global ranking of countries according to the travel freedom for their citizens. It started in 2006 as Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index (HVRTI) and was modified and renamed in January 2018.
- **Definition:** The HPI consists of a ranking of passports according to how many other territories can be reached 'visa-free' (defined below). All distinct destination countries and territories in the IATA database are considered.

- **Rankings of various countries:** India jumped two positions from 81st in 2018 to 79th this year. Japan retained its top spot as the world's most travel-friendly passport due to the document's access to 190 countries. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal ranked further low at 104, 102 and 94 respectively. South Korea edged up the ranking from October's index to join Singapore, offering access to 189 jurisdictions. China jumped almost 20 places in just two years, from 85th in 2017 to 69th this year.
- **European countries** also performed favourably, with European Union member states along with Norway and the US filling in the places behind the top three nations although the UK continues to drop down the rankings, along with the US.

Democracy Index 2018

- **The EIU Democracy Index** provides a snapshot of the state of world democracy for 165 independent states and two territories.
- **The Democracy Index** is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. Based on their scores on 60 indicators within these categories, each country is then itself classified as one of four types of regime: full democracy; flawed democracy; hybrid regime; and authoritarian regime.
- **Performance of India:** India is ranked at 41 – a notch above last year. It is still classified as a 'flawed democracy' according to the index. India achieved a score of 7.23 on the index to maintain its position – the same it did last year. This is the lowest ever score attributed to India in the index ever since its publication. India ranks below the US (ranked 25th in the index) and other so called 'flawed democracies' like Italy, France, Botswana and South Africa.
- **Flawed democracy:** The report defines a flawed democracy as nations that "have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected. However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation."

World Gold Council (WGC)

- **Important observations made:** Performance of financial markets, monetary policy in key economies including India, and the dollar movement will determine gold demand in 2019. Since gold is considered a safe haven, during choppy markets, the demand for gold improves, normally. Emerging markets, led by India and China—the biggest consuming markets—make up 70% of consumer demand for the metal.
- **About World Gold Council:** The World Gold Council is the market development organisation for the gold industry. It works across all parts of the industry, from gold mining to investment, and their aim is to stimulate and sustain demand for gold.
- **The World Gold Council** is an association whose members comprise the world's leading gold mining companies. It helps to support its members to mine in a responsible way and developed the Conflict Free Gold Standard. Headquartered in the UK, they have offices in India, China, Singapore, Japan and the United States.

National Clean Air Programme

- **The programme** will not be notified under the Environment Protection Act or any other Act to create a firm mandate with a strong legal back up for cities and regions to implement NCAP in a time bound manner for effective reduction.
- **Key features of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):** Achieve a national-level target of 20-30% reduction of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration by between 2017 and 2024. Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) will execute this nation-wide programme in consonance with the section 162 (b) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1986. The programme has been launched with an initial budget of ₹300 crore for the first two years.

- **The plan includes** 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015. Non-attainment cities are those which have been consistently showing poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. These include Delhi, Varanasi, Bhopal, Kolkata, Noida, Muzaffarpur, and Mumbai.
- **As part of the programme**, the Centre also plans to scale up the air quality monitoring network across India. At least 4,000 monitors are needed across the country, instead of the existing 101 real-time air quality (AQ) monitors, according to an analysis.
- **The plan proposes a three-tier system**, including real-time physical data collection, data archiving, and an action trigger system in all 102 cities, besides extensive plantation plans, research on clean-technologies, landscaping of major arterial roads, and stringent industrial standards.
- **It also proposes** state-level plans of e-mobility in the two-wheeler sector, rapid augmentation of charging infrastructure, stringent implementation of BS-VI norms, boosting public transportation system, and adoption of third-party audits for polluting industries.
- **Various committees:** The national plan has proposed setting up an apex committee under environment minister, a steering committee under-secretary (environment) and a monitoring committee under a joint secretary. There would be project monitoring committees at the state-level with scientists and trained personnel.
- **Benefits of the programme:** NCAP has certainly helped kick start the much-awaited good practice of setting air pollution reduction targets. The biggest advantage of such targets is that it helps decide the level of stringency of local and regional action needed for the plans to be effective enough to meet the reduction targets.
- **Need of the hour:** The MoEF&CC, as a nodal central and apex agency, will have to flex its authority to ensure all NCAP indicators are integrated with multi-sector and inter-ministerial programmes to align with the air quality target and objectives.
- **NCAP should** not become only a top-down prescriptive approach. In fact, within the federal structure, NCAP, while ensuring compliance, will also have to create enough room for tighter action that can be even stronger than the common minimum national programme as defined by NCAP.
- **State governments** and city authorities should be encouraged and enabled to take those extra steps to meet local targets. City-wise air quality targets will clearly show where much deeper cuts will be needed for hotspot and stronger regional action.
- **NCAP will also have** to join all critical dots with clarity. For instance, in case of vehicular pollution, the main body of the plan has ignored mobility, transportation and urban planning strategies, though fortunately, the indicative broadsheet of action at the end has listed public transport, transit-oriented development policies, and non-motorised transport. But these will have to be detailed out with clear pathways and milestones and integrated well with the NCAP strategies.
- **NCAP will also have** to be more nuanced and adopt appropriate approaches for small and big cities according to their dominant pollution profile while several strategies may remain uniform.

ECO Niwas Samhita 2018

- **Context:** Bureau of Energy Efficiency and CPWD sign MoU on promoting energy efficiency in buildings
- **According to the MoU**, BEE and CPWD will cooperate on promoting designs and construction of Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) compliant new buildings, star rating of CPWD managed buildings across the country with no registration or renewal fee, awareness on energy efficiency in building sector and support for capacity building of CPWD officials in ECBC.
- **ECO Niwas Samhita 2018** an Energy Conservation Building Code for residential buildings, to push for energy efficiency in residential sector was launched on December 14, 2018. It aims to promote design and construction of homes including apartments and townships to give benefits of energy efficiency to the occupants. Ministry of Power launched the ECO Niwas Samhita 2018.
- **Aim of ECO Niwas Samhita 2018:** To benefit the occupants and the environment by promoting energy efficiency in design and construction of homes, apartments and townships.

Role of BEE –

- **Processing of application for star rating of buildings** Preliminary scrutiny of application Data verification of CPWD maintained buildings Installation of smart meters Award of certificate & label Support for Energy Efficiency in Buildings Support for construction of ECBC complaint buildings Efficient coordination with CPWD Capacity building of CPWD officials
- **Role of CPWD** – Completely filled application for star rating Support and facilitation to data verification and monitoring Construction of ECBC Complaint buildings Support for Energy Efficiency in Buildings Efficient coordination with BEE It is anticipated that this initiative will result in energy saving of more than 260 million units in the first stage with operational savings of about Rs. 100 crore.
- **Star Rating for Commercial Buildings:** It is based on the actual performance of a building in terms of its specific energy usage in kwh/sqm/year. It rates office buildings on a 1-5 Star scale, with 5 star labelled buildings being the most efficient. It is on a voluntary basis and label provided under it is applicable for a period of 5 years from the date of issue.
- **It provides public recognition to energy efficient buildings, and creates a “demand side” pull.** Various categories of buildings like Day Use Office Buildings, BPOs, Shopping Malls and Hospitals in the five climatic zones have been identified under the scheme.
- **Background:** About Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) – Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) is a statutory body, set up by the Government of India on 1st March 2002 under the provision of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
- **The mission** is to assist in developing policies and strategies with a thrust on self-regulation and market principles with the primary objective of reducing energy intensity of the Indian economy within the overall framework of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001. This will be achieved with active participation of all stakeholders, resulting into accelerated and sustained adoption of energy efficiency in all sectors.
- **About Central Public Works Department (CPWD)** – CPWD came into existence in July, 1854 when Lord Dalhousie established a central agency for execution of public works and set up Ajmer Provincial Division. It is headed by DG who is also the Principal Technical Advisor to the Government of India. It has PAN India presence and has ability to undertake construction of complex projects.
- **It has been involved** construction of stadiums and other infrastructure requirements for Asian Games 1982 and Commonwealth Games 2010. CPWD is now engaged in construction of Afghan Parliament Building (beyond national boundaries).



PRADHAN MANTRI SWASTHYA SURAKSHA YOJANA (PMSSY)

- **The PMSSY** envisages creation of tertiary healthcare capacity in medical education, research and clinical care, in the underserved areas of the country. It aims at correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/reliable tertiary healthcare services and also augmenting facilities for quality medical education in the country. PMSSY has two components- setting up of new AIIMS like institutes in underserved regions of the country: and up-gradation of existing Govt Medical Colleges (GMCs). Under PMSSY, the progress so far is:
- **The derailed contractual arrangements for six new AIIMS (AIIMS-Patna, AIIMS- Rishikesh, AIIMS-Jodhpur, AIIMS-Bhopal, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar and AIIMS- Raipur)** put back on track and construction expedited. Since July 2014, 3000 hospital beds added in the six functional AIIMS (including about 1000 beds added in the last one year). 2 new AIIMS announced for Jharkhand and Gujarat in 2017-18. - Basket of services in six AIIMS expanded and presently, on an average, about 3000 major surgeries are getting performed every month.
- **OPD services started in AIIMS Rae Bareilly.** - Sites finalized for 3 AIIMS in Jammu, Kashmir, and Gujarat and sanction of Cabinet obtained for AIIMS in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, W. Bengal, Punjab, Poorvanchal in UP, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana and Tamil Nadu.
- **Undergraduate MBBS courses started at AIIMS Mangalagiri & Nagpur** with induction of first batch of 50 students each. - Construction of Super Specialty Block in 10 GMCs Trauma Centres in four GMCs completed.
- **Construction work of Super Specialty Block in progress for 01GMCs under Phase-I & II and 39 GMCs under Phase-III of PMSSY.** - 15 Government Medical Colleges taken up for upgradation in Phase-IV & V(A) out of which work has been awarded for 11 GMCs upgradation projects.
- **CENTRE FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE AND RESEARCH (CIMR) AT THE ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS)** The Center for Integrative Medicine and Research is a pioneering initiative by AIIMS, New Delhi in the quest for convergence of contemporary medicine with India's ancient and traditional medical practices and has been envisioned as a "state of the art" research center. It has been designed as a perfect platform for rigorous research to establish the efficacy of our traditional methods of healing.

Earth's magnetic North Pole is moving

- **Impact on World Magnetic Model:** The problem has got so bad, researchers around the world are scrambling to update a global model of the fields. Called the World Magnetic Model, it underlies all modern navigation, from the systems that steer ships at sea to Google Maps on smartphones.
- **WHY ARE THE EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELDS MOVING?** The problem lies partly with the moving pole and partly with other shifts deep within the planet. Liquid churning in Earth's core generates most of the magnetic field, which varies over time as the deep flows change.
- **In 2016**, for instance, part of the magnetic field temporarily accelerated deep under northern South America and the eastern Pacific Ocean. Satellites such as the European Space Agency's Swarm mission tracked the shift.
- **WHAT IS THE WORLD MAGNETIC MODEL?** The charts, known as the World Magnetic Model (WMM), are used to convert between compass measurements of magnetic north and true north and can be found in the navigation systems of ships and airplanes as well as geological applications (such as drilling and mining).
- **The WMM is also part of map applications in smartphones, including the Google Maps App.** Researchers from the U.S.'s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) maintain the WMM.
- **WHAT COULD HAPPEN TO EARTH IF ITS POLES FLIPPED?** Scientists in recent years have predicted that Earth's magnetic field could be gearing up to 'flip' – a shift in which the magnetic south pole would become magnetic north, and vice versa. Such an event could have catastrophic effects, wreaking havoc on the electric grid and leaving life at the surface exposed to higher amounts of solar radiation.
- **Electric grid** collapse from severe solar storms is a major risk. As the magnetic field continues to weaken, scientists are highlighting the importance off-the grid energy systems using renewable energy sources to protect the Earth against a black out.

- **Very highly charged particles can have a deleterious effect on the satellites and astronauts.** The Earth's climate could also change. A recent Danish study has found that the earth's weather has been significantly affected by the planet's magnetic field.

Section 126 of the RP Act, 1951

- **What Section 126 of RP Act, 1951 states?** Section 126 of the RP Act prohibits displaying any election matter by means, inter alia, of television or similar apparatus, during the period of 48 hours before the hour fixed for conclusion of poll in a constituency.
- **"Election matter"** has been defined in that Section as any matter intended or calculated to influence or affect the result of an election. The provision prohibits conduct of Exit poll and dissemination of their results during the period mentioned therein, in the hour fixed for commencement of polls in the first phase and half hour after the time fixed for close of poll for the last phase in all the States.
- **Violation of the provisions** of Section 126 is punishable with imprisonment upto a period of two years, or with fine or both.
- **What has been suggested?** Internet service providers and social media companies should take down content violating the 48-hour ban on campaigning prior to polling, instantly and latest within 3 hours of EC issuing such a direction.
- **Amend Section 126(1)** of R P Act to impose the "campaign silence period" on print, electronic media and intermediaries. The definition of intermediaries, as per Section 2(w) of the Information Technology Act, includes telecom service providers, internet service providers, web-hosting service providers, search engines, etc.
- **Bring in changes** in the model code of conduct to ensure that parties release their manifesto at least 72 hours prior to polling (or 72 hours prior to polling for first phase in a multi-phase election).
- **Star campaigners** should desist from addressing press conferences or giving interviews on election matters during silence period. Also, in a multi-phased election, there should be no direct or indirect reference seeking support for parties/candidates in constituencies observing silence period.
- **Intermediaries should** ensure that their platforms are not misused to vitiate free and fair polls. This would include a notification mechanism by which EC may notify the platform of potential violations of Section 126 of R P Act.
- **While EC will** appoint an officer to liaise with the intermediaries, the latter should open a special grievance redressal channel for EC and have a dedicated team during election period to interface with and take quick action on receipt of EC order to take down or disable content in violation of R P Act.
- **Intermediaries** should report to the Commission on measures taken to prevent abuse of their platforms, including generating publicly-available action taken reports. All political advertisements may be clearly labelled as such and be pre-approved by a EC-appointed content monitoring committee. The intermediaries would also need to maintain a repository of political advertisements with information on their sponsors, expenditure and targeted reach.
- **Significance and implications:** The recommendations made by the Committee, when implemented will help in minimizing the possible interference of activities which aim at indirectly influencing voters during the valuable silence period of 48 hours provided to them.
- **Way ahead:** The task of maintaining campaign silence during last 48 hours before the conclusion of polling is becoming increasingly onerous in the light of the increasing influence of digital media. So, apart from the regulation by law and ECI instructions, the resolve, proactive support and sustained effort by all stake holders is necessary to contain the evil impact.

Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza

- **Context:** The Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP) has been launched by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) in association with Municipal Governments of Guiyang and Dalian.
- **About the SIDCOP:** The initiative aims to bring Indian IT companies and Chinese enterprises closer to each other on a single AI enabled platform. This platform will be managed by a joint venture comprising of one Indian and Chinese company. The initiative aims to encash the expertise of Indian IT enterprises in business transformation and operational optimization by using IT tools in complex business environments.

- **It offers** a boundary-less marketplace for Chinese enterprises in order to assist them in operational optimization and adopting industry best practices in business solutions by connecting with Indian enterprises.
- **National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM):** NASSCOM is a not-for-profit industry association and is the apex body for the Indian IT-BPM industry.
- **The membership** of the NASSCOM is open for Companies registered in India and are focused on providing IT-BPM products and services. NASSCOM aims to make sure that service quality and enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights have been properly implemented in the Indian software and BPM industry.

Partnership Summit

- **Context: The 25th edition of the Partnership Summit will be held in Mumbai.** It is being organized by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, State Government of Maharashtra and Confederation of Indian Industry.
- **What is it?** The Partnership Summit provides for a global platform to dialogue, debate, deliberate and engage Indian and global leaders on economic policy and growth trends in India.
- **It is expected** to build new partnerships and explore investment opportunities through high level exchanges and B2B meetings. It will showcase India in the present landscape of an emerging "New India", the "New Global Economic Address".
- **Confederation of Indian Industry – CII** is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry led and industry-managed organization, playing a proactive role in India's development process. Founded in 1895, India's premier business association has around 9000 members, from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs.
- **CII works** to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government, and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.

Renuka dam

- **Context:** The Centre has signed an agreement with Chief Ministers of five States — Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh — to restart construction of the Renuka multipurpose dam project in the Upper Yamuna Basin.
- **About the Renuka dam project:** The Renuka dam project has been conceived as a storage project on the Giri river (a tributary of the Yamuna) in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh.
- **The project** envisages making a 148-metre-high dam for supplying water to Delhi and other basin States. It will also generate 40 MW of power. Funding: Around 90% of the cost of irrigation/drinking water component of the project i.e. ₹3,892.83 crore will be provided by the Central government and the remaining ₹432.54 crore by the rest of the basin States.
- **Significance and impacts:** After the construction of the dam, the flow of the Giri river will increase by about 110%, which will help meet the drinking water needs of Delhi and other basin States.
- **Water** from the Renuka dam will be used by U.P., Haryana and National Capital Territory of Delhi from Hathnikund barrage, by the NCT of Delhi from Wazirabad barrage and by U.P., Haryana and Rajasthan from the Okhla barrage.

Armed Forces Veteran Day

- **The Armed Forces** are celebrating the Veterans Day on 14 Jan to honour the veterans the Army, Navy and Air Force.

- **Background:** This special day started as a day to reflect upon the heroism of those who died in our country's service and was originally called Armistice Day. It fell on Nov. 11 because that is the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I. However, in 1954, the holiday was changed to 'Veterans Day' in order to account for all veterans in all wars.
- **In India –** For the first time the Indian Armed Forces celebrated the Veteran's Day on 14th January 2015, the day on which the first Field Marshall General KM Cariappa retired from service.

Indus Food 2019:

- **Context:** INDUS FOOD-II will be held on 14th and 15th January, 2019, at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida. Theme: 'World Food Supermarket'.
- **About INDUS FOOD:** INDUS FOOD is a platform of its kind exclusively devoted to enhancing Indian exports in F&B sector. The event is aimed at promoting India as a strong and reliable exporter of food and beverage products to the world. It enables B2B engagements of buyers and suppliers, after careful business matchmaking, which takes care of precise business requirements of each participant, and enables him to pick and choose whom to meet.

Army Tech Seminar (ARTECH 2019)

- **In its quest** for modernization through optimum use of emerging technologies, Indian Army organized the Army Technology Seminar – 2019 (ARTECH 2019) on the theme "Disruptive Impact of Emerging Technologies on Land Warfare" at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi.
- **Aim of the Seminar –** The aim is to bring together stakeholders in the military, academia and industry to provide perspective on the available and emerging technologies which could have an impact on warfighting.



GLOBAL PRESENCE

- **India is a regular** participant and leading speaker at global events viz. World Health Assembly 2017, UN Health Assembly, BRICS 2018 and The Astana-Global Conference on Primary Healthcare 2018.
- **India is the interim Chair** of the high level advisory group as well as member of the Executive Committee of the PMNCH (Partnership for Maternal, Neo-natal and Child Health) Board. India has played a leadership role in development of the updated Global Strategy for Women, Children & Adolescents and was the implying force in getting adolescent health to be included in the global strategy. PMNCHs global Partners' Forum 2018 was hosted by MoHFW in Delhi from 10th-14th December, 2018.
- **India and Macedonia** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of Health. The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation: Capacity building and short term training of human resources in health; Exchange & training of medical doctors, officials, other health professionals and experts; Assistance in development of human resources and setting up of health care facilities;
- **Any other area of cooperation** as may be mutually decided upon. India and Jordan signed an MoU on cooperation in the field of Health & Medical Science. The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation: Universal Health Coverage (UHC); Health System Governance; Services and Information Technology in Health; Health Research;
- **National Health Statistics;** Health Finance and Health Economy; Chronic Disease Control; Tobacco Control; Diagnosis, Treatment and Medication in Tuberculosis; Regulation of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices; and Any other area of cooperation as may be mutually decided upon.

India and Iran signed an MoU on cooperation in the field of Health, on 17th February, 2018 during the visit of the President of Iran to India. The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation:

- **Exchange experience in training of medical doctors and other health professionals;** Assistance in development of human resources and setting up of health care facilities; Regulation of pharmaceuticals, medical devices and cosmetics and exchange of information thereon;
- **Cooperation** in the field of medical research, new technologies and knowledge based initiatives; Public health, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and cooperation in international health; and
- **Any other area** of cooperation as may be mutually decided upon. To further strengthen collaborative work between India and World Health Organization (WHO) in achieving improved health outcomes, MoHFW and WHO signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).
- **The Union Cabinet** approved the MoU on cooperation in the field of regulation of medical products for human use, amongst the medicine regulatory agencies of the BRICS countries. The MoU would facilitate better understanding about the regulatory aspects between the parties and could help in increasing India's export of medical products to BRICS countries.

The Union Cabinet approved the signing of a Cooperation Arrangement between Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), MoHFW and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Livestock (MAIL), Afghanistan for cooperation in the field of food safety and related areas. The areas of cooperation include the following:

- **Establishment** of a mechanism of information exchange and communication; Facilitating technical exchange on identified topics of interest especially about import procedures, quality control operations, sampling, testing, packaging and labelling;
- **Facilitating/organization** of joint seminars, workshops, visits, lectures, training programme, etc;
- **Other areas of interest** to the participants within their responsibilities as they may mutually determine. The cooperation arrangement will facilitate information sharing training and capacity building measure and learning from each others best practice to improve food safety ecosystem.
- **The Union Cabinet** gave ex-post facto approval to the MoU between India and Denmark regarding cooperation in the areas of food safety. The MoU was signed on 16th April 2018. The MoU will help deepen bilateral ties, mutual understanding and trust, eventually strengthening both sides in their capacity building efforts towards food safety. It will further promote understanding of the best practices in the areas of food safety in both countries and in faster resolution of issues related to food safety. It will help improve food safety standard setting by getting access to best practices and facilitating food trade of important commodities.

The Union Cabinet gave ex-post-facto for the MoU between the India and Swaziland on cooperation in the field of health and medicine. The MoU was signed on 9th April 2018. The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation:

- **Drugs & Pharmaceutical products;** Medical Consumable products; Medical Research; Medical Equipment; Public Health; Communicable Disease Control & Surveillance; Health Tourism; and
- **Any other area of mutual interest.** India and Bahrain signed an MoU on cooperation in the field of Health. The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation:- Exchange of information including publications and research outcomes; Exchanging visits by governmental officials, academic staff, scholars, teachers, experts and students;
- **Participating in workshops and training courses;** Encouraging health and medical research activities at both the private-sector and the academic level; and Any other forms of cooperation as may be mutually decided upon.
- **MoU was signed in March, 2018** between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Institut National de la Santeet de la Recherche Medicale (INSERM), France. The MoU will further strengthen relations between ICMR and INSERM within the framework of international scientific and technological cooperation in fields of mutual interest. The scientific excellence on two sides will help to successfully work on health research in specified areas.
- **The MoU aims** at cooperation in areas of common interest within the medical, life sciences and health research fields. Based on scientific excellence on both sides, the parties have agreed to have a specific focus upon: Diabetes and Metabolic disorders;
- **Bio-ethics with focus** on Ethics and regulatory issues of Gene editing techniques; Rare diseases; and Any other areas of mutual interest can be considered after discussions between the two sides.

MoHFW signed an MoU with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Norway

- **MoHFW signed an MoU** with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Norway to extend the cooperation within health sector through the Norway India Partnership Initiative (NIPI) for a period of three years starting from 2018 to 2020. This cooperation between India and Norway is aligned with the development goals of Gol as outlined in its National Health Policy 2017 for achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **The cooperation** shall also focus on global health issues of common interest. The partnership shall also include areas related to maternal, new-born, child health, and shall build on experiences from NIPI phase I and II. The cooperation will continue to focus on innovative, catalytic and strategic support, and stride in taking the Indian Government's Intensification Plan for accelerated maternal and child survival in India.
- **MoU signed between the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)**, India and National Agency for Drug and Food Control (BPOM), Indonesia on cooperation in the field of pharmaceutical products, pharmaceutical substances, biological product and cosmetics regulatory functions. The MoU was on signed on 29th May, 2018 in Jakarta.
- **The MoU is expected** to forge better understanding about each other's regulatory requirements and would be beneficial to both the countries. It could also facilitate India's export of pharmaceutical products and will also establish a framework for fruitful cooperation and exchange of information between the two countries in matters relating to Pharmaceutical products regulation on the basis for equality, reciprocity and mutual benefit. Further, it will facilitate better

understanding between the regulatory authorities of the two countries.

India and Uzbekistan signed an MoU on cooperation in the field of Health. The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation:-

- **India and Uzbekistan** signed an MoU on cooperation in the field of Health. The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation:- Expanding opportunities for the development of business cooperation in the field of medical equipment, including equipment for teaching and research laboratories of institutions of medical education, and pharmaceutical products;
- **Strengthening of primary health care** and setting up of health care facilities; Medical and health research development, as well as exchange of experience in these areas; Exchange of experiences and technologies in the field of telemedicine and electronic-health information systems;
- **Maternal and child health protection**; Development and improvement of the techniques and strategies for epidemiological surveillance and communicable and non-communicable diseases control; Regulation of drugs and pharmaceutical products; Any other areas of cooperation of mutual interest.
- **Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC)** between India and Japan in the field of Healthcare and Wellness signed on 29th October, 2018. The MoC covers the following areas of cooperation: Promoting specific projects: Developing human resource in the field of acute medicine, surgery and trauma care including focus on new areas of competency in each field; Establishing an advanced joint testing laboratory for clinical examination; Establishing a Japanese language education centre for trainee candidates of care workers;
- **Establishing collaborations among tertiary care centres in both countries such as AUMS; and** Supporting sending organisations to provide pre-lectures about elderly care for technical intern training programmes of care-workers through sending out certificated care workers from Japan and providing a curriculum and textbooks so as to provide trained care-givers to Japan.

Development of infrastructure:

- **Establishing a centralised management** healthcare distribution centre; Improving sanitary environment by increasing access to hygienic and affordable toilets such as on-site processing one;
- **Promoting institutional** collaboration on patient data analysis and information and Communication Technology & Artificial Intelligence in medicine; India-Japan Innovation Hub in India;
- **Establishing high end mobile BSL 3 Lab** facilities in India; and Collaboration on getting high end medical devices including Point of Care Diagnostics with a special focus on establishing manufacturing units in India under "Make in India".

Human development:

- **Developing human resource**, research and project promotion for health self-management such as ME-BYO and Ayurveda; and Holding an India-Japan public and private healthcare forum.
- **(d) Any other areas** as may be mutually decided upon to promote the synergies between AYUSHMAN Bharat Programme and other initiatives and AHWM; and **(e)** Any other areas as may be mutually decided upon to promote cooperation as envisaged under this MOC.
- **Secretary, MoHFW**, has been elected to serve as President of the COP Bureau (the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)) from 2017-19.

- **India is the founding member** of the Partners in Population & Development (PPD) - an Inter-Governmental Organization, formed during the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 for promoting South-South Cooperation in the field of Reproductive Health, Population and Development. India is currently the Vice Chair of the PPD Board.
- **MoHFW is working towards** strengthening India's leadership on AMR (Anti Microbial Resistance) and a revised and robust National Action Plan to combat AMR has been released early this year.

Hunar Haats

- **Hunar Haats: What are they?** Hunar Haats are organised by Ministry of Minority Affairs under USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.
- **The USTTAD scheme** aims at preserving & promoting the rich heritage of the traditional arts & crafts of the Minority communities. This is one of the flagship programmes of the Ministry.
- **Significance of Hunar Haats:** Hunar Haats have become a successful mission to provide employment and income generation opportunities with platforms for marketing the products of master artisans, craftsmen and culinary experts belonging to the minority communities.
- **It envisages** at boosting the skill of craftsmen, weavers and artisans who are already engaged in the traditional ancestral work.

Women of India Festival 2016:

- **Key facts:** The Festival will offer on sale the biggest selection of organic products ranging from food, fabrics and furniture to wellness, personal care and solar products. It is being organised and sponsored by the Union Ministry of Women & Child Development.
- **Significance:** This initiative is a move to benefit women entrepreneurs, and also actively promote organic food and products. The Women of India Festival is also intended to highlight the health and environmental advantages of organic goods, provide a platform for women engaged in this economy and encourage the development of sustainable and easily accessible sales outlets for organic producers from remote areas.
- **On 14th January 2019**, Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development will inaugurate National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) Mohali Regional Centre.
- **National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)** – It is a premier organization devoted to promotion of voluntary action research, training and documentation in the overall domain of women and child development. It was established in New Delhi in 1966 under Societies Registration Act of 1860.
- **It functions** under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Regional Centres at Guwahati (1978), Bangalore (1980), Lucknow (1982) and Indore (2001) Institute's expertise and performance was recognized by UNICEF in 1985 when it awarded the Maurice Pate Award for its outstanding contribution in the field of Child Development.

Right to Disconnect Bill 2018

- **Key features and highlights of the Bill:** Aim: The Right to Disconnect Bill aims at "reducing stress and ease tension between an employee's personal and professional life." The Bill gives employees the right to not respond to calls or any kind of communications from the employers after office hours.
- **The Bill requires** the setting up of an Employee Welfare Authority, which will publish reports related to the impact employees have from prolonged use of digital tools beyond office hours and it will also create a charter defining employee-employer negotiation.

- **According to the Bill**, “Companies with more than 10 employees would periodically negotiate specific terms with their workers, publish their own charter, and create an Employee Welfare Committee consisting of representatives of the company’s workforce.”
- **Concerns and challenges faced by workers:** With dynamic business demands in an evolving corporate landscape, striking a work-life balance has become difficult but also a priority. The imbalance leads to stress, anxiety and sleep deprivation—notable trends in studies on employee health.
- **The traditional service sector** has to often deal with unreasonable work hours, working overtime without extra compensation, or carrying their work home. The insidious impact of ‘always on’ organizational culture is often unaccounted for or disguised as a benefit – increased convenience, for example, or higher autonomy and control over work-life boundaries.
- **Need and significance of the Bill:** After being in the workplace for eight hours or more, it might be very stressful for a person to respond to office-related calls after work. According to experts, work-related stress can often lead to a lot of physical and mental ailments including depression, which might go undiagnosed. As a result of which, a person might face a lot of problem in his professional and personal life as well. The Right to Disconnect Bill 2018, if passed, will help people strike work-life balance and lead a better life.
- **Efforts in this regard:** Countries like France and Germany have already adopted the right to disconnect laws, with the French government setting the example first in 2004, when it clarified that an employee unreachable on a smartphone outside of work hours will not be tagged for misconduct.
- **The European Union** had voted in 2015 to regard the time spent in commute (to and from work) as work. In India, a Kolkata-based firm became the third in the country to sanction menstruation leave (of two days per month) to its female employees starting New Year’s Day.
- **Way ahead:** The bill is yet to be discussed in the Lok Sabha. The odds however are stacked against the bill’s discussion. Data reveals that fewer than 5% of private bills are even debated in Lok Sabha. According to research from PRS Legislative published in 2015, the 13th Lok Sabha discussed barely 5% of private bills, the 14th Lok Sabha discussed 3%, while the 16th Lok Sabha discussed only 2.85% of private bills.
- **According to Parliamentary rules**, a private bill has an expectancy of 6 years to be discussed, before lapse.

Banks to review mudra loan book

- **Background:** The rising NPAs under the scheme are a matter of concern. It is already three years and there is a need to review how the banks are sanctioning the loans. The RBI has already flagged its concerns regarding the bad loans to the government.
- **What went wrong?** In order to push the scheme, there had been an overemphasis on banks to meet loan disbursement targets. In the race to meet the target, the credentials of loan-seekers were not being properly verified and in many instances, loans were being given without any collateral or security, making it difficult for the banks to go after defaulters.
- **About the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) scheme:** The PMMY Scheme was launched in April, 2015. The scheme’s objective is to refinance collateral-free loans given by the lenders to small borrowers.
- **The scheme**, which has a corpus of Rs 20,000 crore, can lend between Rs 50,000 and Rs 10 lakh to small entrepreneurs. Banks and MFIs can draw refinance under the MUDRA Scheme after becoming member-lending institutions of MUDRA. Mudra Loans are available for non-agricultural activities upto Rs. 10 lakh and activities allied to agriculture such as Dairy, Poultry, Bee Keeping etc, are also covered.
- **Mudra’s unique** features include a Mudra Card which permits access to Working Capital through ATMs and Card Machines. There are three types of loans under PMMY: Shishu (up to Rs.50,000). Kishore (from Rs.50,001 to Rs.5 lakh). Tarun (from Rs.500,001 to Rs.10,00,000).
- **Objectives of the scheme:** Fund the unfunded: Those who have a business plan to generate income from a non-farm activity like manufacturing, processing, trading or service sector but don’t have enough capital to invest can take loans up to Rs 10 lakh. Micro finance institutions (MFI) monitoring and regulation: With the help of MUDRA bank, the network of microfinance institutions will be monitored. New registration will also be done.
- **Promote financial inclusion:** With the aim to reach Last mile credit delivery to micro businesses taking help of technology solutions, it further adds to the vision of financial inclusion. Reduce jobless economic growth: Providing micro enterprises with credit facility will help generate employment sources and an overall increase in GDP.
- **Integration of Informal economy** into Formal sector: It will help India also grow its tax base as incomes from the informal sector are non-taxed.

One family One Job scheme of Sikkim

- **Context:** Sikkim has announced the One family one job scheme to provide employment to the youth of Sikkim.
- **About the Scheme:** One family one job scheme entitles one government job for every family in the state. Eligibility: Only members of those families which do not have a government job at present are eligible for government employment under the scheme. The government has announced that the nature of the job is not temporary and would be regularised after five years.
- **Significance:** Sikkim is the first state in the country to launch an exclusive programme which entitles every family in the state with a government job and Sikkim earmarks 70% of its revenues towards salaries for state government employees.

Trishna Gas Project

- **ONGC has** discovered 10-12 gas bearing wells in the Trishna Wildlife sanctuary.
- **About National Wildlife Board:** National Board for Wild Life is a statutory organization constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. It is an apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approves projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries.
- **Composition:** The National Board for Wild Life is chaired by the Prime Minister, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the vice-chairman of the Board and the members include 15 non-government members, 19 ex-officio members and 10 government officials such as secretaries.
- **Facts for Prelims:** Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary: The Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1988. The vegetation covers four broad categories of tropical semi-evergreen forest, the east Himalayan lower Bhanar sal, Moist mixed deciduous forest and the Savanah woodland.

'Ama Ghare LED' scheme

- **Key features of the scheme:** Under the scheme, 9-watt LED bulbs will be distributed to the beneficiaries registered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the State Food Security Scheme (SFSC).
- **Odisha Power** Transmission Corporation Ltd (OPTCL) will implement the scheme and the bulbs will be distributed through camps and PDS outlets across the State.
- **Biometric authentication:** The beneficiaries will have to produce biometric authentication to get the benefits of the scheme.

National Youth Parliament Festival 2019:

- **Context:** National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 has begun, thereby beginning the celebration of the National Youth Day 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.

- **The National Youth Parliament Festival 2019** will be conducted at three levels: District Youth Parliament (DYP) at the district level. State Youth Parliament (SYP) at the State Level. National Youth Parliament (NYP) at the National Level. The National Service Scheme and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan organizations will remain involved at different levels in its conduct and management.
- **Background:** 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.

Macedonia renamed as the Republic of Northern Macedonia:

- **Sarva Bhasha Kavi Sammelan:** Context: Kavi Sammelan, a National Symposium of Poets, is being held in Chennai.
- **About Sarva Bhasha Kavi Sammelan:** Sarva Bhasha Kavi Sammelan of All India Radio (AIR) aims to provide a creative platform for national integration and linguistic harmony through mutual interaction and coordinated presentation of the best in contemporary poetry of all Indian languages. The Kavi Sammelan made its beginning in 1956 and is one of its kind programme wherein 23 eminent poets from 22 Indian languages come together on one stage to offer their creative best.
- **Asian Waterbird Census (AWC):** Context: A waterbird survey conducted in the Upper Kuttanad region of Kerala has recorded 16,767 birds of 47 continental and local species. The survey, conducted as part of the annual Asian Waterbird Census, has spotted three new species — Greater flamingo, Grey-headed lapwing, and Blue-cheeked bee-eater.
- **About AWC:** Asian Waterbird Census is an annual event in which thousands of volunteers across Asia and Australasia count waterbirds in the wetlands of their country. This event happens every January. This event is coordinated by wetlands International and forms part of global waterbird monitoring programme called the International Waterbird Census (IWC).
- **Asian Waterbird Census (AWC)** was started in the year 1987. Its main focus is to monitor the status of waterbirds and the wetlands. AWC also aims to create public awareness on various issues concerning wetlands and waterbird conservation. Each year the census is carried out as a voluntary activity. In India, the AWC is annually coordinated by the Bombay Natural history Society (BNHS) and Wetlands International.
- **What are waterbirds?** According to Wetlands International (WI), waterbirds are defined as species of birds that are ecologically dependent on wetlands. These birds are considered to be an important health indicator of wetlands of a region.



Year Ender 2018: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare AYUSHMAN BHARAT

- **Ayushman Bharat** is a centrally sponsored programme anchored in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives, namely Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PMJAY). Brief details of these components are as following:
- **Ayushman Bharat-Health & Wellness Centres (AB-HWC)** Delivery of comprehensive primary health care services through Health & Wellness Centres is a critical component of the newly announced Ayushman Bharat scheme. It places people and communities at the center of the health care delivery system, making health services responsive, accessible and equitable.
- **Nearly 1.5 lakh** Sub-Centres and Primary Health Centres would be transformed as Health & Wellness Centres by 2022 to provide comprehensive and quality primary care close to the community while ensuring the principles of equity, affordability and universality.
- **Till date, 4503 HWCs have been operationalized in various states.** Key components of AB-HWC: Additional Human Resource - New cadre of health care professional- referred to as the Mid-Level Health Provider- who is a nurse or an Ayurvedic Practitioner trained and accredited for a set of competencies related to primary health care and public health. Mid-Level Health Provider will lead the team of MPWs and ASHAs at SHC level
- **Multiskilling/ Training** of existing service providers - upgrading skills to provide expanded package of services Efficient logistics system to ensure availability of wide range of drugs and point of care diagnostics
- **Robust IT system** – to create unique health id and longitudinal health record of all individuals and provision of tele-consultation services Provision of services related to indigenous health system and yoga etc for promotion of wellness
- **Linkages with schools** to train Health and Wellness Ambassadors to enable creating healthy habits in schools
- **The package of services envisaged at AB-HWC are:** Care in pregnancy and child-birth. Neonatal and infant health care services Childhood and adolescent health care services Family planning, Contraceptive services and other Reproductive Health Care services Management of Communicable diseases including National Health Programmes Management of common communicable diseases and outpatient care for acute simple illness and minor ailments.
- **Screening, Prevention,** Control and Management of non-communicable diseases. Care for Common Ophthalmic and ENT problems Basic Oral health care Elderly and palliative health care services Emergency Medical Services Screening and Basic management of Mental health ailments
- **Key benefits for community under AB-HWC:** Expanded package of primary care services –ranging from maternal and child health, communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases (universal screening, prevention, control and management of five common communicable diseases: hypertension, diabetes and three common cancers – those of the oral cavity, breast and cervix, primary health care for diseases for the eye, oral health, ENT, mental health, provision of palliative care and care for the elderly, and medical emergencies)
- **Wide range of free drugs** Point of care diagnostics at the centres. Tele-consultation services with Medical Officers for complications Continuum of care ensured through referral linkages and protocols Unique health id – longitudinal health record for each individual Services related to indigenous health system and yoga for promotion of wellness.

Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)

- **Ayushman Bharat** – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) aims to cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage up to Rs. 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization.
- **PMJAY has been launched** on September 23, 2018. After the launch of PMJAY, RSBY and SCHIS got subsumed in it.

- **Key features:** PMJAY is an entitlement based scheme. This scheme covers poor and vulnerable families based on deprivation and occupational criteria as per SECC (Socio-economic caste census) data. As on 30.12.2018: Number of Hospitals Empanelled: 16,112 Beneficiaries Admitted: 6,81,825 E-cards Issued: 39,48,496
- **PMJAY provides cashless** and paperless access to services for the beneficiary at the point of service in any (both public and private) empanelled hospitals across India. All beneficiary families of RSBY and SCHIS are entitled for benefits under PMJAY.
- **Under PMAJY**, the States are free to choose the modalities for implementation. They can implement the scheme through insurance company or directly through the Trust/ Society or mixed model.
- **There is no restriction** on family size, ensuring all members of designated families specifically girl child and senior citizens get coverage.
- **At National level**, National Health Agency (NHA) in the form of Society has been registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, to implement the scheme. NHA is responsible for all operational matter of PMJAY. NHA is functioning w.e.f. 11.05.2018.
- **MoU has been signed** between National Health Agency, Government of India and 31 States/UTs namely, Uttar Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar Island, Lakshadweep, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Jharkhand, Bihar, Puducherry, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Tripura, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Goa, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Out of these 31 States/UTs**, 25 states/UTs namely Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Manipur, Gujarat, Nagaland, Sikkim, West Bengal, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Daman & Diu, Haryana, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Goa, Bihar, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar have launched PMJAY on 23.09.2018.
- **Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission** Council, as an Apex body has been set up to provide policy direction to the scheme.
- **More than 1350 packages** have been finalized by an expert committee headed by Director General, Health Services and peer reviewed by NITI Aayog.
- **Operational Guidelines** on various operational matters of PMJAY, Model tender documents etc are in place. Details are available on official website i.e. www.abnhpm.gov.in.

AUGMENTATION OF ASHA BENEFITS:

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economics Affairs** had on 19th September, 2018 approved a proposal to introduce an ASHA Benefit Package w.e.f from October, 2018 (to be paid in November, 2018) with two components, namely, coverage of ASHAs and ASHA Facilitators meeting the eligibility criteria under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and an increase in the amount of routine and recurring incentives under National Health Mission for ASHAs from Rs. 1000/- per month to Rs. 2000/-per month. The total estimated cost of the Scheme is Rs 1905.46 Crore of which Central share is Rs 1224.97 Crore for two years i.e 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- **As part of this ASHA Benefit Package**, the Union Cabinet has also approved proposal of enhancing supervisory visit charges for ASHA Facilitators from Rs. 250/-per visit to Rs. 300/- per visit for 2018-2019 to 2019- 2020 w.e.f from October 2018 (to be paid in November, 2018) on 24th October 2018. ASHA Facilitator will undertake about 20 supervisory visits per month. With this approval ASHA Facilitators would receive about Rs 6000 per month against Rs 5000 per month that is an increase of Rs 1000/- per month. The estimated additional expenditure to be incurred is Rs 74.53 crore in 2018 -19 and 2019-20 with central share of Rs.46.95 crore comprising of Rs 15.65 crore during 2018-19 (for six months) and Rs. 31.30 crore during 2019-20.
- **Key features:** Estimated 1063670 ASHAs and ASHA Facilitators to be covered under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) Estimated 9573032 ASHAs and ASHA Facilitators to be covered under Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana
- **Estimated 10,22,265 ASHAs** will get at least minimum of Rs`2000 per month from current Rs 1000 per Month for routine and recurring activities. 41,405 ASHA facilitators to be benefitted with increased supervisory charges.

NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY 2017

- **The National Health Policy** of the country was launched after a gap of 15 years. The Cabinet in its meeting held on 15th March, 2017 approved the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017. NHP 2017 addresses the current and emerging challenges necessitated by the changing socio-economic, technological and epidemiological landscape.
- **The process of formulation** of the new Policy entailed wide consultation with multiple stakeholders and regional consultations before its approval by the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare and Group of Ministers.
- **The major commitment of the NHP 2017** is raising public health expenditure progressively to 2.5% of the GDP by 2025. It envisages providing larger package of assured comprehensive primary healthcare through the Health and Wellness Centres. The Policy aims to attain the highest possible level of health and well-being for all at all ages through a preventive and promotive healthcare and universal access to quality health services without anyone having to face financial hardship as a consequence.
- **This would be achieved** through increasing access, improving quality and lowering the cost of healthcare delivery. NHP 2017 advocates allocating major proportion (two-thirds or more) of resources to primary care and aims to ensure availability of two beds per 1,000 population distributed in a manner to enable access within golden hour. The Policy also takes a fresh look at strategic purchase from the private sector and leveraging their strengths to achieve national health goals and seeks stronger partnership with the private sector.
- **Besides this, the highlights of the Policy are as following:** Assurance based approach - The Policy advocates progressively incremental assurance-based approach with focus on preventive and promotive healthcare Health Card linked to health facilities- The Policy recommends linking the health card to primary care facility for a defined package of services anywhere in the country.
- **Patient Centric Approach-** The Policy recommends the setting up of a separate, empowered medical tribunal for speedy resolution to address disputes /complaints regarding standards of care, prices of services, negligence and unfair practices, standard regulatory framework for laboratories and imaging centers, specialized emerging services, etc
- **Micronutrient Deficiency-** There is a focus on reducing micronutrient malnourishment and systematic approach to address heterogeneity in micronutrient adequacy across regions.
- **Quality of Care- Public hospitals** and facilities would undergo periodic measurements and certification of level of quality. Focus on Standard Regulatory Framework to eliminate risks of inappropriate care by maintaining adequate standards of diagnosis and treatment.
- **Make-in-India Initiative-** The Policy advocates the need to incentivize local manufacturing to provide customized indigenous products for Indian population in the long run.
- **Application of Digital Health-** The Policy advocates extensive deployment of digital tools for improving the efficiency and outcome of the healthcare system and aims at an integrated health information system which serves the needs of all stake-holders and improves efficiency, transparency, and citizen experience.
- **Private sector engagement** for strategic purchase for critical gap filling and for achievement of health goals.
- **NHP 2017 has been duly** supported by the Government through provision of Rs. 47352.51 crores to MoHFW under the Union Budget 2017-18. The amount is a 27.7% increase in allocation over previous year's allocation. Further, in 2018-19 as well, increase of 11.5% in the outlay of health over 2017-18 with allocation of Rs.52,800 crore. Also, Rs. 24,908.62 crore provided for NHM in 2018-19, Rs. 2967.91 crore more than last year.

ALLIED AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS BILL, 2018

- **The Union Cabinet** approved the Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2018 on 22nd November 2018 for regulation and standardisation of education and services by allied and healthcare professionals. The Bill provides for setting up of an Allied and Healthcare Council of India and corresponding State Allied and Healthcare Councils which will play the role of a standard-setter and facilitator for professions of Allied and Healthcare.
- **Key features:** Establishment of a Central and corresponding State Allied and Healthcare Councils; 15 major professional categories including 53 professions in Allied and Healthcare streams.
- **The Bill provides** for Structure, Constitution, Composition and Functions of the Central Council and State Councils, e.g. Framing policies and standards, Regulation of professional conduct, Creation and maintenance of live Registers, provisions for common entry and exit examinations, etc.
- **The Central Council** will comprise 47 members, of which 14 members shall be ex-officio representing diverse and related roles and functions and remaining 33 shall be non-ex-officio members who mainly represent the 15 professional categories.
- **The State Councils** are also envisioned to mirror the Central Council, comprising 7 ex-officio and 21 non-ex officio members and Chairperson to be elected from amongst the non-ex officio members.

- **Professional Advisory Bodies** under Central and State Councils will examine issues independently and provide recommendations relating to specific recognised categories. The Bill will also have an overriding effect on any other existing law for any of the covered professions.
- **The State Council** will undertake recognition of allied and healthcare institutions. Offences and Penalties clause have been included in the Bill to check mal-practices.
- **The Bill also empowers** the Central and State Governments to make rules. Central Govt. also has the power to issue directions to the Council, to make regulations and to add or amend the schedule.
- **Expected benefits:** Bring all existing allied and healthcare professionals on board during the first few of years from the date of establishment of the Council. Opportunity to create qualified, highly skilled and competent jobs in healthcare by enabling professionalism of the allied and healthcare workforce. High quality, multi-disciplinary care in line with the vision of Ayushman Bharat, moving away from a 'doctor led' model to a 'care accessible and team based' model.
- **Opportunity to cater** to the global demand (shortage) of healthcare workforce which is projected to be about 15 million by the year 2030, as per the WHO Global Workforce, 2030 report.

NOTIFICATION FOR MEDICAL DEVICES RULES, 2017

- **MoHFW has notified Medical Devices Rules, 2017** for comprehensive regulation of Medical devices notified under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, including their import, clinical investigation, manufacture, sale and distribution.
- **The new rules** are harmonised with the international regulatory practices and provide comprehensive legislation for the regulation of Medical Devices to foster India specific innovation and provide a fillip to 'Make in India'.
- **A separate** and dedicated wing is set up under Drug Controller General of India for effective implementation of New Medical Devices Rules, 2017 with effect from 1.1.2018.
- **Presently** 15 notified categories of medical devices are regulated under the provisions of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules 1945.

FIXED DOSE COMBINATIONS (FDCs) REGULATION

- **MoHFW has prohibited** the manufacture for sale, sale or distribution for human use, of select Fixed Dose Combinations (FDCs) with immediate effect from 12th September, 2018. It has also restricted the manufacture, sale or distribution of select FDCs subject to certain conditions.
- **MoHFW**, in exercise of powers conferred by section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, has prohibited the manufacture for sale, sale or distribution for human use of 328 FDCs through its gazette notifications dated 7th September 2018; it has also restricted the manufacture, sale or distribution of six FDCs subject to certain conditions.

NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION BILL, 2017

- **Cabinet approved the National Medical Commission Bill 2017 on 15th December, 2017** The Bill envisages to: replace the Medical Council 1956 Act.
- **enable a forward** movement in the area of medical education reform. move towards outcome-based regulation of medical education rather than process-oriented regulation.
- **ensure proper** separation of functions within the regulator by having autonomous boards. create accountable & transparent procedures for maintaining standards in Medical Education.

- **create a forward-looking** approach towards ensuring sufficient health workforce in India. Expected benefits of the new legislation: End of heavy handed regulatory control over medical education institutions and a shift towards outcome based monitoring.
- **Introduction of a national** licentiate examination. This will be the first time such a provision is being introduced in any field of higher education in the country, as was the introduction of NEET and common counseling earlier. Opening up the medical education sector will lead to significant addition in the number of UG and PG seats and substantial new investment in this infrastructure sector.
- **Better coordination with AYUSH systems of treatment.** Regulation of up to 40% seats in medical colleges to enable all meritorious students to have access to medical seats irrespective of their financial status.

NATIONAL NUTRITION MISSION (NNM)

- **The Cabinet** has recently approved the National Nutrition Mission, a joint effort of MoHFW and the Ministry of Women and Child development (WCD) towards a life cycle approach for interrupting the intergenerational cycle of under nutrition.
- **The impact** of the mission is envisioned to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies. It will create synergy, ensure better monitoring, issue alerts for timely action, and encourage States/UTs to perform, guide and supervise the line Ministries and States/UTs to achieve the targeted goals.
- **The mission** aims to benefit more than 10 crore people. It shall be launched in December 2017 with a three year budget of Rs.9046.17 crore commencing from 2017-18, to cover 315 districts in 2017-18, 235 districts in 2018-19 and remaining districts in 2019-20. Major components/features of the Mission:
- **Mapping of various** Schemes contributing towards addressing malnutrition Introducing a very robust convergence mechanism ICT-based real time monitoring system Incentivizing States/UTs for meeting the targets Incentivizing Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) for using IT based tools Eliminating registers used by AWWs
- **Introducing measurement** of height of children at the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) Social Audits Setting-up Nutrition Resource Centres, involving masses through Jan Andolan for their participation on nutrition through various activities, among others.

MENTAL HEALTHCARE ACT, 2017

- **The Act adopts** a rights-based statutory framework for mental health in India and strengthens equality and equity in provision of mental healthcare services in order to protect the rights of people with mental health problem to ensure that they are able to receive optimum care and are able to live a life of dignity and respect.
- **The Act strengthens** the institutional mechanisms for improving access quality and appropriate mental healthcare services.
- **The Act increases** accountability of both government and private sectors in delivery of mental healthcare with representation of persons with mental health problem and their care-givers in statutory authorities such as Central and State Mental Health Authority.
- **The most progressive** features of the Act are provision of advance directive, nominated representative, special clause for women and children related to admission, treatment, sanitation and personal hygiene; restriction on use of Electro-Convulsive Therapy and Psychosurgery.
- **Decriminalization** of suicide is another significant facet of the Act, which will ensure proper management of severe stress as a precursor for suicide attempts.

HIV & AIDS (Prevention & Control) Act, 2017

- **It aims to end** the epidemic by 2030 in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations.

- **A person living** with AIDS cannot be treated unfairly at employment, educational establishments, renting a property, standing for public or private office or providing healthcare and insurance services
- **The Act also aims** to enhance access to healthcare services by ensuring informed consent and confidentiality for HIV-related testing, treatment and clinical research.
- **Every HIV infected** or affected person below the age of 18 years has the right to reside in a shared household and enjoy the facilities of the household.
- **The Act prohibits** any individual from publishing information or advocating feelings of hatred against HIV positive persons and those living with them. No person shall be compelled to disclose his/her HIV status except with their informed consent, and if required by a court order. Every person in the care and custody of the State shall have right to HIV prevention, testing, treatment and counselling services.
- **The Act suggests** that cases relating to HIV positive persons shall be disposed' off by the court on a priority basis and duly ensuring the confidentiality.
- **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)** India's UIP is one of the largest public health programmes in the world. It targets 3 crore pregnant women and 2.7 crore new borns annually. More than 90 lakh immunization sessions are conducted annually. It is the most cost-effective public health intervention and largely responsible for reduction of vaccine preventable under-5 mortality rate.

New initiatives under UIP:

- **Mission Indradhanush:** Government of India has launched Mission Indradhanush (MI) in December 2014, a targeted programme to immunize children who have either not received vaccines or are partially vaccinated. The activity focuses on districts with maximum number of missed children.
- **Four phases** of Mission Indradhanush have been completed wherein 3.38 crores children have been vaccinated, of which 81.67 lakh children have been fully immunized.
- **In addition**, 86.88 lakh pregnant women were vaccinated against tetanus. Under Mission Indradhanush, the annual rate of increase of full immunisation coverage has increased from 1% to 6.7 % during the two rounds.
- **The sixth phase of MI** is ongoing in 75 districts across 17 States/UTs from October – December 2018.
- **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)** has been launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 8th October 2017 from Vadnagar, Gujarat. The Intensified Mission Indradhanush has been carried out in 121 districts in 16 States, 52 districts in the North Eastern States and 17 urban areas where immunization coverage has been very low in spite of repeated phases of Mission Indradhanush and in UIP, with an aim to rapidly build up full immunization coverage to more than 90% by December 2018.

Introduction of new vaccines

- **Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV):** India is polio free but to maintain this status, the Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) was introduced. Till August 2018, around 6.4 crore doses of IPV have been administered to children since its introduction.
- **Adult Japanese Encephalitis (JE) Vaccine:** Japanese Encephalitis is a life-threatening viral disease affecting brain mainly in children aged less than 15 years. However, National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) had identified 31 high burden districts from Assam, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal for adult JE vaccination in the age-group of 15-65 years. The Adult JE vaccination campaign has been completed in all 31 districts of Assam, UP, West Bengal, wherein more than 3.29 crore beneficiaries aged 15-65 years were vaccinated.
- **Rotavirus Vaccine:** Rotavirus is one of the leading causes of severe diarrhoea and death among young children. At present, Rotavirus vaccine has been introduced in 9 States - Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Tripura. Approximately 2.6 crore doses of Rotavirus vaccine have been administered to children since its introduction till September 2018.
- **Measles-Rubella (MR) Vaccine:** Rubella vaccine has been introduced in UIP as Measles-Rubella vaccine to provide protection against congenital birth defects caused by Rubella infection. The campaign has been completed in 20 states/UTs (namely, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Odisha, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Mizoram, Manipur, Punjab) and ongoing in 8 states/UTs (namely, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, J&K, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura). A total of 13.04 crore children vaccinated till 29th October 2018.

- **Pneumococcal Vaccine (PCV):** PCV was launched in a phased manner in UIP in May'17 for reducing infant mortality and morbidity caused by pneumococcal pneumonia. It has been launched on 13th May, 2017.
- **PCV is given in entire Bihar,** Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, 12 district of Uttar Pradesh and 9 districts of Rajasthan. Till September 2018, around 59.48 lakh children have been covered under it.

NATIONAL VIRAL HEPATITIS CONTROL PROGRAM

- **MoHFW launched the National Viral Hepatitis Control Program** on World Hepatitis Day, 2018 – 28th July. MoHFW also released the Operational Guidelines for National Viral Hepatitis Control Program, National Laboratory Guidelines for Viral Hepatitis Testing and National Guidelines for Diagnosis and Management of Viral Hepatitis.
- **The program has been** launched with the goal of ending viral hepatitis as a public health threat in the country by 2030. The aim of the initiative is to reduce morbidity and mortality due to viral hepatitis.
- **The key strategies include preventive** and promotive interventions with focus on awareness generation, safe injection practices and socio-cultural practices, sanitation and hygiene, safe drinking water supply, infection control and immunization; co-ordination and collaboration with different Ministries and departments; increasing access to testing and management of viral hepatitis;
- **promoting diagnosis** and providing treatment support for patients of hepatitis B & C through standardized testing and management protocols with focus on treatment of hepatitis B and C; building capacities at national, state, district levels and sub-district level up to Primary Health Centres (PHC) and health and wellness centres such that the program can be scaled up till the lowest level of the healthcare facility in a phased manner.

LABOUR ROOM QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE - LaQshya

- **MoHFW launched LaQshya** to improve the quality of care that is being provided to the pregnant mother in the Labour Room and Maternity Operation Theatres, thereby preventing the undesirable adverse outcomes associated with childbirth.
- **The goal is to reduce preventable maternal** and new-born mortality, morbidity and stillbirths associated with the care around delivery in Labour room and Maternity OT and ensure respectful maternity care.
- **The initiative will be implemented** in Government Medical Colleges (MCs) besides District Hospitals (DHs), and high delivery load Sub- District Hospitals (SDHs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs).
- **Currently incentives are being given to facilities achieving the targets outlined:** Rs.6 lakhs for Medical Colleges Rs.3 lakhs for District Hospitals Rs.2 lakhs for SDH/CHCs The initiative plans to conduct quality certification of labour rooms.

PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHIT MATRITVA ABHIYAN (PMSMA)

- **The program aims** to provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th of every month. PMSMA has been rolled out in all States/ UTs.
- **Over 1.7 crore** quality antenatal checkups have been conducted at PMSMA sites for comprehensive services under the programme.
- **More than 8 lakh high** risk pregnancies have been identified under PMSMA.

- **PMSMA is conducted** at over 13100 government health facilities across all State/UTs. Approx 5250 volunteers are enrolled on PMSMA portal across all State/UTs.

INTENSIFIED DIARRHEA CONTROL FORTNIGHT (IDCF)

- **Observed during** July-August every year since 2014 with the ultimate aim of 'zero child deaths due to childhood diarrhea'.
- **IDCF is being implemented** as a campaign for control of deaths due to diarrhoea across all States & UTs.
- **Main activities include** intensification of advocacy activities, awareness generation activities, diarrhoea management service provision, establishing ORS-zinc demonstration sites, ORS distribution by ASHA through home visitation, detection of undernourished children and their treatment, promotion of Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) activities by home visits by ASHA and establishing IYCF corners.
- **Nearly 28 crore under-5** children have been reached since 2014 by ASHA with Prophylactic ORS.

RASHTRIYA BAL SWASTHYA KARYAKRAM (RBSK)

- **Launched in February** 2013 for child screening and free treatment for 4 Ds i.e. Defects at birth, Diseases, Deficiencies and Development delays including disability. Provisions free management of 30 selected health conditions.
- **As on date:** 11020 teams in 36 State/UTs are in place. 92 District Early Intervention Centres (DEICs) are functional. Nearly 82.5 crore children were screened and 1.96 crore children availed services for treatment since inception.

NATIONAL DEWORMING DAY (NDD)

- **To combat STH infections**, the Health Ministry has adopted a single day strategy called NDD, wherein single dose of albendazole is administered to children from 1-19 years of age group through the platform of schools and anganwadi centres.
- **Till February 2018**, 26.68 crore children have been administered albendazole. Further, more than 114 crore doses of Albendazole were administered to children 1-19 years, since 2015.

RASHTRIYA KISHOR SWASTHYA KARYAKRAM (RKSK)

- **Started in 2014** as a comprehensive programme focusing on Sexual Reproductive Health, Nutrition, Injuries and violence (including gender based violence), Non-Communicable Diseases, Mental Health and Substance Misuse with a promotive and preventive approach.
- **The interventions are carried out using health facilities, community and schools as platforms:** Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHCs): These act as the first level of contact of primary health care services with adolescents. Till Sept '18 7459 AFHCs have been established across the country and around 30.93 lakh adolescent clients availed the services of AFHCs during Apr '18 to Sept '18 . Total 1681 Adolescent Health Counselors are in place to provide counseling services. Linkages have also been established with Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres (ICTC) for management of HIV/AIDS and treatment of RTI/STI cases.

- **Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) Programme:** It entails provision of weekly supervised IFA tablets to in-school boys and girls and out-of-school girls and biannual albendazole tablets, besides Nutrition & Health Education. The programme aims to cover a total of 11.9 crore beneficiaries including 9.4 crore in-school and 2.5 crore out-of-school beneficiaries. Around 4 crore beneficiaries (3.38 crores in school adolescents and 63 lakhs out of school adolescent girls) were covered under WIFS every month during Apr '18 to June '18.
- **Menstrual Hygiene Scheme:** The scheme is being implemented for adolescent girls in the rural areas. From 2014 procurement of sanitary napkins has been decentralized. In FY 2018-19 Rs. 4254 Lakhs have been allocated through NHM to 15 States/UTs for decentralized procurement of sanitary napkins through the process of competitive bidding. States are in the process of implementing MHS.
- **Peer Education Programme:** Under the programme four peer educators (Saathiya) - two male and two female are selected per 1000 population to orient the adolescents on health issues. The Peer Education programme is being implemented in 214 districts and till date 2.19 lakh PEs have been selected and training of ANMs and Peer Educators is under process.

MISSION PARIVAR VIKAS (MPV)

- **Launched in 146 districts** of 7 States for substantially increasing the access to contraceptives and family planning services in districts with TFR of 3 and above.
- **MPV encompasses the following gamut of activities** Roll out of Injectable Contraceptives Sterilization Compensation Scheme Condom Boxes in public health facilities MPV Campaigns and Saarthi (IEC vehicle) Nayi Pehl Kits to the newly married couples Saas Bahu Sammelan

FAMILY PLANNING – LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (FP-LMIS)

- **Launched to strengthen the supply-chain management system.** The National training of trainers (ToT) has been completed.
- **State level trainings** have been completed in 28 states and 17 States/ UTs have also initiated the district level trainings.

PRADHAN MANTRI NATIONAL DIALYSIS PROGRAMME

- **'National Dialysis Programme'** to be supported in all district hospitals in a PPP mode under NHM; the program has been implemented with states support in 445 districts across 28 states/UTs. Under NHM support is provided to States/UTs for provision of free dialysis services to the poor.
- **So far, 647 operational dialysis** units/centers and 3953 Dialysis Machines have been made operational and nearly 35 lakh dialysis sessions have been conducted.

FREE DRUGS & DIAGNOSTICS SERVICES INITIATIVE

- **MOHFW has provided** an indicative list of drugs & diagnostics investigations to be provided at each level of health care facility. However, the state may provision for additional number of drugs & diagnostic services. In PHCs, 285 medicines and 19 types of test available.

- **In CHCs, 455 medicines and 39 types of test available.** In District Hospitals, 544 medicines and 56 types of test available. Since 2015, more than Rs. 16631 crore has been accorded to the States/UTs.

BIOMEDICAL EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

- **MoHFW organized consultations** with officials from states to devise appropriate mechanisms to ensure that medical equipment already purchased are used and properly maintained. An extensive exercise was undertaken to map the inventory of all Bio-medical equipment including their functionality status.
- **The mapping has been completed** in 29 States. 7,60,849 number of equipment in 29,115 health facilities costing approximately Rs 4646.37 Crore were identified. Equipment in range of 13% to 34% was found dysfunctional across states.
- **BMMP has been implemented in total 26 States** 20 States in PPP mode in the state of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Punjab, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Jammu & Kashmir.
- **In house mode of 6 States - Gujarat, D&N Haveli, Daman & Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep, Tamil Nadu.** The tender to outsourcing is in progress in 6 States- Goa, Haryana, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Odisha and Manipur.

SWACHHTA HI SEWA

- **Encouraged by the achievements** of Kayakalp Scheme, National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) has decided to consider assessment of healthcare facilities in the private sector on the lines of parameters of Kayakalp Scheme. The Health Ministry will recognise the outstanding work done by the private hospitals on an annual basis. This is an initiative as part of the Swachhta Hi Sewa cleanliness and sanitation campaign being undertaken across various parts of the country.
- **The initiative has resulted** in bringing significant improvement in the sanitation and hygiene, patient satisfaction, behavioural change in the staff & employees of the Hospitals/Institutions, patients and their attendants towards cleanliness. Public perception towards cleanliness & hygiene in public healthcare facilities has also been changing.

NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF CANCER, DIABETES, CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES AND STROKE (NPCDCS)

- **In order to prevent** and control major Non-Communicable Diseases, Government of India is implementing the NPCDCS in all States across the country with the focus on strengthening infrastructure, human resource development, health promotion, early diagnosis, management and referral.
- **Progress so far:** 36 State NCD cells established 515 District NCD cells established 548 District NCD Clinics and 2591 NCD Clinics at CHC set up 167 Cardiac Care Units (CCU), 152 District Day Care Centers set up More than 3.32 crore persons screened at NCD Clinics upto September 2018 in 2018-2019
- **Strengthening of Tertiary Care for Cancer** 35 State Cancer Institutes/Tertiary Care Cancer Centers approved to mentor all Cancer-related activities in their respective areas. National Cancer Institute being set up at Jhajjar in Haryana. The second Campus of Chhitaranjan National Cancer Institute being set up in Kolkata

POPULATION-BASED PREVENTION, CONTROL, SCREENING & MANAGEMENT FOR DIABETES, HYPERTENSION AND COMMON CANCER (ORAL, BREAST and CERVICAL)

- **Recently launched population-based** initiative for Diabetes, Hypertension and Common Cancers is an important move. Services of ASHAs will be used for risk profiling and front-line health workers and primary & secondary health care infrastructure will be leveraged for screening and service delivery. This activity will generate awareness on risk factors of NCDs as well.
- **Operational Guidelines for Screening** and Management of NCDs as part of Comprehensive Primary Care under NHM has already been developed and circulated. Training of Trainers for Medical Officers, Staff nurse, ANMs and ASHAs have been completed and 70853 ASHAs, 20532 ANMMPWs, 3160 staff nurses and 4111 medical officers have already been trained.
- **As on 1st October 2018, screening** has been initiated in about 215 districts 12 states and 2 UTs and 96,60,870 people have been screened.
- **A software & tablet application** has been developed and being deployed. This application will capture all processes and will help in efficient program management, quality service delivery, treatment adherence and awareness generation.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD) AND CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE (CKD)

- **In order to prevent and manage** the COPD and CKD, also major causes of death due to NCDs, their intervention has been included under NPCDCS.
- **Till date, CKD intervention** as part of NPCDCS has been implemented in 40 districts and COPD intervention in 121 districts

NATIONAL MULTISECTORAL ACTION PLAN

- **National Multisectoral Action** Plan to prevent and control NCDs has been developed with consultation with a range of stakeholders including 39 departments of Union Government.
- **The plan and process** of its development has led to scaling up of a number of interventions, having direct impact on NCDs, but outside the health sector. India's multisectoral efforts in prevention and control of NCDs have been recognized by United Nations.

AMRIT (AFFORDABLE MEDICINE AND RELIABLE IMPLANTS FOR TREATMENT)

- **146 pharmacies** have been set up across 23 states for providing medicines for Diabetes, CVDs, Cancer and other disease at discounted prices to the patients.
- **A total of more** than 5200 drugs and other consumables are being sold at upto 50% discounts.
- **As on 30th November 2018**, 104.75 Lakh patients have benefitted from AMRIT Pharmacies.
- **The value of drugs dispensed** at MRP is Rs. 986.67 Crores and there is a savings of Rs. 526.26 Crore thereby reducing their out of pocket expenditure.

REVISED NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL PROGRAMME

- **The Government of India** (GoI) launched the National TB Programme in 1962 to address TB in India. The Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP), based on the internationally recommended Directly Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS) strategy, was launched in 1997 expanded across the country by 2006. In 2007, GoI introduced the Programmatic Management of Drug Resistant TB (PMDT) to combat drug resistance and achieved full geographical coverage by 2013.
- **The Ministry has developed** the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis (2017-25) which builds on the success and learning of the last NSP and encapsulates the bold and innovative steps required to achieve sustainable development goal on TB in India by 2025, five years ahead of the global timelines.

Achievements of RNTCP:

- **More than 2 Crore patients on treatment & saved more than 35 lakh lives in India.** Treatment success rates have tripled from 25% in pre-RNTCP era to 88% presently (TB India 2018) & TB death rates have reduced from 29% to 4%. Currently TB incidence is declining by about 3.3% per year 18.62 lakh TB patients notified, of which 4.4 lakh were from private sector from January to 30th November 2018.
- **Implemented with through** more than 16,574 Designated microscopy Centers & treatment available in every village through 4 lakh DOT centers. Standards for TB Care in India (STCI) developed.
- **In May 2012, TB made** a notifiable disease & developed NIKSHAY – a case based web based system of reporting and monitoring TB patients. More than 12 lakh TB patients reported from private health care providers. Country achieved MDGs related to Tuberculosis in 2016.
- **Incidence of TB declined** by 28% & mortality declined by 58% since 1990. Since 2007: Collaborative efforts being implemented by RNTCP & NACP to take care of patients suffering from both TB & HIV.
- **Single Window for Delivery** of Care for HIV and TB at all ART Centres has been started. The services for HIV-TB have been expanded with use of CBNAAT for diagnosis of TB, daily FDC treatment, information communication technology (ICT) based adherence support, INH Preventive Therapy and Air Borne Infection Control measures are taken care at all ART centres.
- **Shift over to daily regimen** from intermittent regimen for treatment of TB. Entire country is covered by daily regimen since 30th October 2017. Till date > 10 Lakhs patients initiated on daily regimen across the country. Access of drug for the private sector patients.

Drug Resistant TB Services

- **It is estimated** that there are 1.35 lakh drug resistant TB patients in India. 41,250 drug resistant TB patients have been diagnosed from January to September 2018.
- **Bedaquiline** is a new anti-TB drug, discovered after 40 years. 428 District level Drug-Resistant TB Centres including 148 specialized DR-TB Centres, have been established.
- **Delamanid containing** regimes introduced from 22 centre in 7 states Shorter drug regimen and Bedaquiline rolled out in all States. During Jan – November 2018, 12529 MDR/RR-TB patients have been initiated on shorter regimen and 1964 MDR/RR-TB patients have been initiated on newer drug containing regimen (Bedaquiline or Delamanid) throughout the country. Expansion of rapid molecular diagnosis Total 1180 CBNAAT machines are operational as on date.
- **During Jan – Sept 2018.** 17.09 lakh CBNAAT test have been performed in 2018 as compared to 7.48 lakh during the same period in 2017. CBNAAT utilization has increased from 118 tests per lab per month in 1st Quarter 2017 to 185 tests per lab per month in 1st Quarter 2018. TrueNat – an indigenous rapid molecular diagnostics have been tested for feasibility at 100 sites. This will be expanded for diagnosis of TB and DR-TB in phased manner.
- **Universal Drug Susceptibility Testing (UDST)** Universal DST is being implemented across the country since 1st January 2018. Campaign mode – Active Case Finding through systematic active TB screening among clinically & socially vulnerable population.
- **During Jan – November 2018,** 6.5 crore population has been screened and 17,223 cases have been diagnosed. 23 States in 337 Districts have conducted ACF in 2018.

Private Sector Engagement

- **MoU has been signed** on 10th May 2018 with Indian Medical Association (IMA) for wide dissemination of services for TB patients through RNTCP. Under this MoU, private providers will be sensitized in 1000 out of 1700 IMA branches. On a campaign mode a registration drive for enrolling private practitioners in Nikshay will be carried out in collaboration with IMA.
- **Using Global Fund Grant**, public private support agency interventions have been initiated through JEET (Joint Effort for Elimination of TB) Consortium in 45 large cities and 348 districts where in, intensified efforts for notification from private sector use of rapid molecular tests and Govt. provided drugs is accelerated.

NIKSHAY Poshan Yojana,

- **NIKSHAY Poshan Yojana** for providing financial assistance for nutrition support at rate of Rs. 500/- per month has been initiated since April 2018.
- **Since 1st April to November 2018**, Rs. 49.37 Crore have been processed for 4.69 lakh beneficiaries through DBT for NPY.

E-Health advances - programme management and surveillance.

- **Programme is enhancing** its ICT based surveillance tool NIKSHAY.
- **IT enabled adherence** monitoring tool 99 DOTS have been used for all HIV-TB patients across the country. It has been expanded for all TB patients
- **NIKSHAY Aushadhi** – drugs distribution management system has been implemented across the country – 24,846 stores are reporting through NIKSHAY Aushadhi (All State, District and Block level drug stores and 50% of PHC level stores are reporting drug inventory through NIKSHAY Aushadhi)
- **20,000 tablets have** been provided for accelerating NIKSHAY uptake and NIKSHAY Aushadhi implementation
- **Call Centre with capacity** of 90 seats has been established to cater to Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh and expanded to other states gradually. Echo – Technical capacity building sessions being conducted with all 148 nodal DR-TB centres

Community Engagement and Multi-stakeholder efforts

- **For patient centric** and community led response to TB, National TB Forum has been established to engage community.
- **Similarly**, State and District level forums are being established. Network of TB Champion will be created from existing network of 4 lakh treatment supporters and past TB patients and people affected due to TB.
- **RNTCP has been included** as a member of Joint Working Group of NACO and Ministry of Labour & Employment and the Department has been working with the Ministry of Labour and Employment on workplace policy on TB.
- **RNTCP has engaged** with Department of Post to provide sample transport services across the country

- **Research & Development** – collaboration with ICMR, TB Research consortium has been established by various research departments – ICMR, DBT, DST, and others.

Multi-stakeholder Involvement

- **Inter-ministerial** meeting for involvement in TB response was held on 16th August, 2018 which was attended by over 25 ministries. Individual ministries are being followed up.
- **Pilot project with Department of Posts** has been initiated on 19th September 2018 for utilizing postal services for sputum sample transportation.

IEC Activities

- **Advocacy Communication** and Social Mobilization (ACSM) is one of the most important components of the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) to make the people aware on various aspects of the TB disease.
- **2 months campaign in 15 DD and 91 National / Regional Channels.** 1-month campaign in 25 AIR Channels and 242 private FM Channels. Digital media campaign in 3023 theatres with one spot / show / day. Media campaign during ASIA Cup cricket series & India –West Indies Cricket Series on DD Sports which availed 3 Crore viewership.
- **1 month campaign** at 7 states (302 locations) Bus Terminals PAN India. Participation in Perfect Health Mela and Partners Forum Meet 2018. More than 750 tweets have been posted through twitter handle (Sept 2017 – Nov 2018).

IT INITIATIVES

- **Allied & Healthcare Professionals'** Database Portal. More than 3000 professionals have already registered on the portal during the testing phase. The website portal is a2hp.mohfw.gov.in. The portal has a capacity of capturing more than 10 lakhs Allied and Healthcare Professionals' data. It will help the Government to track the number of professionals and streams of allied and healthcare professions in the country. It may further prove helpful in expediting the envisaged processes viz. licensing of professionals, workforce policy planning and bringing transparency in the system by maintaining standards of educational and clinical practice etc.
- **Budget Dashboard on Budget,** Expenditure and Bill Payment position of MoHFW. The Budget Dashboard also incorporates Ministry of AYUSH and Department of Health Research. Budget and expenditure is available in a snapshot and also drilled down details in various categories, such as flagship schemes, Central sector expenditure, North East, SC/ST, Centrally Sponsored Schemes, etc.
- **Various related presentations,** Demand for Grants and all relevant budget circulars are also available on the dashboard. The dashboard has the unique feature of Bill Position for All India Pay & Accounts Offices (PAOs) of this Ministry and also reason for return of bills. It is another step towards transparency.
- **Soft-launch of the Integrated Disease** Surveillance Programme (IDSP) segment of Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) in seven states. The path-breaking initiative will provide near-real-time data to policy makers for detecting outbreaks, reducing the morbidity and mortality and lessening disease burden in the populations and better health systems. The first one-of-its-kind initiative by the GoI, IHIP uses the latest technologies and digital health initiatives. The State Secretaries have been urged to be earnest in adopting this platform to strengthen early outbreak detection and informed public health response. Further, for effective implementation of the platform, 32,000 people at the block level, 13,000 at the district level and 900 at the state level have been trained. The IHIP vision and a ready-reckoner have also been launched to navigate the platform.
- **National Health Portal (NHP)** is functioning as citizen portal for healthcare providing health related information to citizens and stakeholders in different languages (currently six languages). A voice portal, providing information through a toll-free number 1800-180-1104 and Mobile App has also been launched. It serves as a single point access for information on Health and Diseases including health messages; on Regulations, Standards, Policies, Programs, Commissions etc.; Directory Services – Hospitals, Blood Banks, Ambulances.

- **Hospital Information System (HIS)** is being implemented in hospitals for automation of hospital processes to achieve better efficiency and service delivery in Public Health facilities upto CHC level.
- **A case based web based reporting system** called NIKSHAY is established and this has been scaled-up nationwide to capture all TB cases in the public health system.
- **For adherence monitoring 99DOTS** has been implemented wherein the patient just has to give a missed call to a toll free number and the system captures the adherence information.
- **E-CGHS card enables self-printing of CGHS cards** from any location. SUGAM by Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) enables online submission of applications, their tracking, processing & grant of approvals online mainly for drugs, clinical trials, ethics committee, medical devices, vaccines and cosmetics. Provides a single window for multiple stakeholders (Pharma Industry, Regulators, Citizens) involved in the processes of CDSCO.
- **Drugs and Vaccines Distribution Management System (DVDMS)** ('eAushidhi') deals with purchase, inventory management and distribution of various drugs, sutures and surgical items to various District Drug Warehouses of State / UT, District Hospitals (DH), their sub stores at CHC, PHC etc by automating the workflow of procurement, supply chain, quality control and finance department in State / UT level.
- **eRakt Kosh is being rolled out for all** the licensed blood banks in public and private health facilities in States / UTs. eRakt Kosh piloted in blood banks in the State of Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and IRCS Delhi.
- **Mother and Child Tracking System (MCTS)/Reproductive Child Health (RCH)** application is an individual-based tracking system across all the States & UTs to facilitate timely delivery of antenatal and postnatal care services and immunization to children with an objective of improving IMR, MMR, & morbidity. A total of 15.31 crore pregnant women and 13.11 crore children aged registered on MCTS / RCH portal.
- **Kilkari application has been launched to deliver** free weekly audio messages about pregnancy, child birth and care. Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand are presently covered under Kilkari.
- **Approximately 16.93 crore** successful calls (average duration of content played in each call: approximately 1 minute) were made under Kilkari.
- **Mobile Academy is a free audio training** course designed to expand and refresh the knowledge base of ASHAs and improve their communication skills. Launched in 2016, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand are presently covered under Mobile Academy. A total of 1.52 Lakh ASHAs registered in MCTS / RCH portal have started the Mobile Academy course, out of which 1,22,194 ASHAs have completed the course till November, 2018.
- **ANM on Line (ANMOL) a tablet based** application for Integrated RCH Register which allows ANMs to enter and update data for beneficiaries of their jurisdiction has been piloted in the State of Andhra Pradesh and Currently 11,941 ANMs in Andhra Pradesh are using ANMOL. It is being further rolled out in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Telangana.

MERA ASPATAAL

- **MoHFW has designed** an ICT-based Patient Satisfaction System (PSS) for implementation in public and empanelled private hospitals.
- **The application** has been named 'मेरा अस्पताल' ('My Hospital' in English). A multi-channel approach i.e. web portal, mobile application, Short Message Service (SMS) and Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) is being used to collect patients' feedback.
- **The application** automatically contacts the patient to collect information on patient's experience in government hospitals. Under Phase I, more than 1000 hospitals have been covered and more than 14 lakh feedback received so far.
- **ONLINE REGISTRATION SYSTEM (ORS)** is a framework to link various hospitals for online registration, payment of fees and appointment, online diagnostic reports, enquiring availability of blood online etc. As on date, around 124 hospitals including Central hospitals like AIIMS –New Delhi & other AIIMS (Jodhpur; Bihar, Rishikesh, Bhubaneswar, Raipur, Bhopal); RML Hospital; SIC, Safdarjung Hospital; NIMHANS; Agartala Government Medical College; JIPMER etc. are on board ORS. So far around 13 lakh appointments have been transacted online.

MOBILE APPS: Various mobile apps have been launched namely Indradhanush (for immunisation tracker)

- **India Fights Dengue** (enables a user to check Dengue Symptoms, get nearest Hospital / Blood bank information and also share feedback)
- **NHP Swasth Bharat** (information dissemination on Disease, Lifestyle, First Aid) NHP Directory Services Mobile App. (provides information related to Hospital and Blood banks across India have been hosted).
- **No More Tension Mobile App.** (information on stress management related aspects)

Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) Mobile App. (for providing pregnancy care by volunteer doctors across states)

- **Telemedicine** National Medical College Network (NMCN) is being established with the purpose of e-Education and e-Healthcare delivery, wherein 50 Government Medical Colleges are being interconnected, riding over NKN (National Knowledge Network – high speed bandwidth connectivity). National Resource Centre has been established at SGPGI, Lucknow.
- – **National Telemedicine Network (NTN):** It is envisaged to provide Telemedicine Services to the remote areas by upgrading existing Government Healthcare Facilities (MC, DH, SDH, PHC, and CHC) in States. In the current financial year 4 States/UTs (previous 7) have been provided financial assistance for providing Tele-Medicine services by establishes NTN.
- – **Tele-Medicine Nodes** at Pilgrim places: In line with the Prime Minister vision of using space technology to deliver health services, MoHFW & Department of Space (DoS) jointly have been taking steps to set up Satellite communication based Telemedicine nodes at various unreachable geographical locations including Chardhams and other important pilgrimage centres (Amarnath, Ayappa and Kedarnath) for health awareness, screening of non-communicable disease (NCD) and for providing specialty consultation to the devotees visiting these places. So far, Telemedicine nodes have been setup at Amarnath Cave-J&K, Ayappa Temple-Kerala, Dwarkadheesh Temple-Gujarat, Kashi Vishwanath Temple-U.P and Vidhyanchal Devi Temple, UP.
- – **Tele-Evidence:** Tele-evidence is a modality via which doctors can testify in the judicial process utilizing the video conferencing facility without visiting the courts in person. This service was launched by Hon'ble HFM on 30.12.2015 at PGIMER, Chandigarh. As per reports, till date more than 4000 Tele-Evidences have been successfully conducted. After this successful implementation MoHFW has decided to rollout the service in every State/UT.

NATIONAL VECTOR BORNE DISEASE CONTROL PROGRAMME (NVBDP)

- **Malaria** India is committed to malaria elimination by 2030 in response to the global call by WHO for eliminating malaria by the end of the year 2030.
- **In response to the above,** India drafted National Framework for malaria elimination and was launched by HFM in February, 2016 which was followed by drafting of National Strategic Plan (NSP) for malaria elimination (2017-2022). Both the above documents give clear vision as well as time bound strategies for malaria elimination by 2027.
- **After the call for malaria elimination,** India strengthened its interventions by providing and increasing the outreach of malaria diagnosis by using Rapid Diagnostic Kits (for both Pv&Pf), effective anti-malarials like Artemisinin combinations, provision of Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs) – 50 million already distributed in North-eastern states and Orissa (more in pipeline for high endemic areas of Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand). Decrease in total malaria cases from 805804 in 2017 to 375845 (53.36% decline) in 2018 till November.
- **Decrease in Pf cases** from 509229 in 2017 to 183889 (63.89% decline) in 2018 till November.

Dengue & Chikungunya

- **Disease surveillance** is carried out through identified Sentinel Surveillance Hospitals (SSHs) with laboratory facility networked across the country and linked with Apex Referral Laboratories (ARLs) with advanced diagnostic facility for backup support.

- **Number of SSHs and ARLs** increased to 646 and 16 respectively. Case Fatality Rate (deaths per 100 cases) for Dengue is sustained at less than 1.0% (National target) since 2008 due to training of clinicians on case management as per National guidelines.
- **May 16 observed as National Dengue Day** throughout country. Dengue cases declined by 36% and deaths by 33% compared to 2017. Chikungunya cases declined by 22% in 2018 compared to 2017.

Japanese Encephalitis (JE)

- **Constitution of National Programme** for Prevention and Control of JE/AES to reduce morbidity, mortality and disability due to JE/AES.
- **A total of 139 Sentinel Surveillance Site Laboratories (SSSHs)** and 15 Apex Referral Labs identified in the country for testing of JE in AES cases. JE vaccination campaign in children (1-15 yrs) completed in 229 out of 231 JE endemic districts.
- **Adult vaccination (15-65 years):** Completed in all 31 districts identified in Assam, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. States have been requested to make JE a Notifiable disease.

Kala-Azar

- **Kala-azar is a notifiable disease in all four endemic states.** Kala-azar elimination programme has made significant progress, Reduction of 70.6% in cases of Kala-azar from 13869 (2013) to 4073 (2018 Till Nov.). Reported deaths due to Kala-azar have also reduced to 100% as being Nil deaths in 2017 as compared to 11 in 2014. There is Nil death reported in 2018 (Nov.)
- **Intensification of disease surveillance** activities to identify the cases early and ensuring their complete treatment. Single day single dose treatment with Liposomal AmBisome, is available for cases of visceral leishmaniasis, which has improved the treatment compliance and outcome.
- **Synthetic pyrethroid** is used for indoor residual spraying, in all the endemic areas. Gol is providing wage loss compensation of INR. 500 to the Kala-azar cases and INR 4000 to cases of Post Kala-Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis for complete treatment.
- **An incentive of INR. 500/-** to ASHA workers for ensuring complete treatment of kala-azar case and INR. 200/- for two rounds during Indoor Residual Spray (IRS) for generating community awareness and community mobilization.

Lymphatic Filariasis

- **Out of 256 Lymphatic Filariasis endemic districts,** till 2018 99 (36.8%) districts have cleared Transmission Assessment Survey (TAS) and Mass Drug Administration (MDA) compare to 5 districts clearing TAS by 2013.
- **A new intervention Triple Drug Therapy,** Ivermectin+DEC+Albendazole (IDA) has been approved and to be implemented in 5 districts namely Arwal (Bihar), Simdega (Jharkhand), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Yadgir (Karnataka) and Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh).
- **IDA has been** successfully launched in Arwal district.

MEDICAL EDUCATION

- **A common National Entrance Exam** viz. National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) has been made mandatory for admission to all medical courses in the country. Indian students can also pursue medical education abroad and have to qualify a Screening Test called Foreign Medical Graduates Exam (FMGE), for registration to practice in India after obtaining primary medical qualification (MBBS) overseas.
- **The proposal of Medical Council of India (MCI)** to amend the Screening Test Regulations, 2002, making it mandatory to qualify NEET to pursue foreign medical course has been approved by MoHFW. Indian Citizens / Overseas Citizen of India intending to obtain primary medical qualification from any medical institution outside India, on or after May 2018, shall have to mandatorily qualify the NEET for admission to MBBS course abroad.
- **The result of NEET** shall be deemed to be treated as the Eligibility Certificate for such persons, provided that such persons fulfils the eligibility criteria for admission to the MBBS course prescribed in the Regulations on Graduate Medical Education, 1997.

Other achievements are:

- **Up-gradation of existing** State Government Medical Colleges: A total of 36 Medical Colleges with 2615 MBBS seats have been approved. Rs. 1471.30 Crore has been released for 36 Medical Colleges till date.
- **New medical colleges** attached with existing District/ Referral hospitals: MoUs received from all States/UT; 57 proposals approved so far, Rs.7125.45 Crore released for 57 medical colleges till November 2018. out of 57 approved medical colleges, 22 have become functional.
- **Total PG seats is 37630** (including 4454 INI) till November 2018 and the DNB seats, which are equivalent to MD/MS are 6737 as on 30 October 2018. Total UG (MBBS) seats stand at 70412 till November 2018.
- **With the amendment in Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations, 2002 Act**, it has been stipulated that every physician should prescribe drugs with generic names legibly and preferably in capital letters and he/she shall ensure that there is a rational prescription and use of drugs.
- **An MoU with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)** has been signed to scale up the short term healthcare courses through its available robust platform. Under this MoU, curriculum for 10 courses especially designed for the health sector, will provide more than 14 lakh trained manpower by 2025.



Year End Review 2018- (Department of Consumer Affairs) : Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution - Weights and Measures Unit

- **(1) Amendment** made in the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 to safeguard the interest of consumers and ease of doing business came into force w.e.f. 01.01.2018. Goods displayed by the seller on e-commerce platform shall contain declarations required under the Rules. Ø Specific mention is made in the rules that no person shall declare different MRPs (dual MRP) on an identical pre-packaged commodity. Ø Size of letters and numerals for making declaration is increased, so that consumer can easily read the same.
- Ø **The net quantity** checking is made more scientific. Ø Bar Code/ QR Coding is allowed on voluntarily basis. Ø Provisions regarding declarations on Food Products have been harmonized with regulation under the Food Safety & Standards Act. Ø Medical devices which are declared as drugs, are brought into the purview of declarations to be made under the rules.
- Ø **On the representations** of Industries and their Associations on the huge inventory of packaging materials with them, permission was given by this Department for making declarations under these amended rules by affixing sticker or by stamping or online printing or using a tag upto 31.7.2018. Further, to facilitate smooth transition and for ease of doing business advisories have been issued to the Controllers of Legal Metrology of State Governments not to take coercive action against the industry upto 31.7.2018 for font size.
- **(2) Permission** to display revised MRP due to reduction of rates of GST up to 31st December, 2018: Ø On account of implementation of GST w.e.f. 1st July, 2017, there may be instances where the retail sale price of a pre-packaged commodity is required to be changed. In this context, the manufacturers or packers or importers of pre-packaged commodities were allowed to declare the revised retail sale price (MRP) in addition to the existing retail sale price (MRP), for three months w.e.f. 1st July 2017 to 30th September, 2017. Declaration of the changed retail sale price (MRP) was allowed to be made by way of stamping or putting sticker or online printing, as the case may be.
- Ø **Use of unexhausted** packaging material/wrapper was also been allowed upto 30th September, 2017 after making the necessary corrections.
- Ø **Considering the requests** received to extend the permission for some more time it was extended to display the revised MRP due to implementation of GST by way of stamping or putting sticker or online printing further up to 31st March, 2018.
- Ø **When Government** reduced the rates of GST on certain specified items, the permission was granted under sub-rule (3) of rule 6 of the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011, to affix an additional sticker or stamping or online printing for declaring the reduced MRP on the pre-packaged commodity. In this case also, the earlier Labelling/ Sticker of MRP will continue to be visible.
- Ø **This relaxation** will also be applicable in the case of unsold stocks manufactured/ packed/ imported after 1st July, 2017 where the MRP would reduce due to reduction in the rate of GST post 1st July, 2017.
- Ø **The above permission/ relaxation were extended upto 31st March, 2018.** Ø As the Government has further reduced the rates of GST on certain specified items, permission has been granted to affix an additional sticker or stamping or online printing as the case may be, for declaring the reduced MRP on the pre-packaged commodity upto 31st December, 2018. However, the earlier Labelling/ Sticker of MRP will continue to be visible.
- Ø **This relaxation** is also applicable in the case of unsold stocks manufactured/ packed/ imported where the MRP would reduce due to reduction in the rate of GST w.e.f. 27th July, 2018. Any packaging material or wrapper which could not be exhausted by the manufacturer or packer or importer, may also be used for packing of material upto 31st December, 2018 or till such date the packing material or wrapper is exhausted, whichever is earlier after making corrections required in retail sale price (MRP) on account of reduction of G.S.T. by way of stamping or putting sticker or online printing.
- **(3) Support to State Governments:** Ø Grants in aid were released for the construction of Laboratory Buildings to States / UTs Governments for effective enforcement of weights and measures laws.
- Ø **Legal standard equipment** have been supplied to State Governments for calibration, verification and stamping of weights and measures and weighing and measuring instruments to ensure the correct quantity delivered to the consumers. Ø Training programs at National Physical Laboratory, New Delhi were organised for the enforcement officers of the State Governments.
- **(4) Initiatives** taken for Regional Reference Standards Laboratories at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad, Guwahati and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology, Ranchi Ø All RRSLs and Indian Institute of Legal Metrology, Ranchi have been accredited by National Accreditation Board of Laboratories (NABL).

- **Ø Two new Regional Reference Standards Laboratories** are being established at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh and Nagpur, Maharashtra. The land for both the laboratories has already been purchased from the respective State Governments and the construction work is yet to start. Ø The up gradation of Regional Reference Standards Laboratory, Bangalore is in progress to make it at par with the best International Laboratories in the field of Legal Metrology.
- **(5) Advisories issued:** (i) In the interest of consumers advisory has been issued to the Controllers of Legal Metrology of all States/UTs to enforce overcharging and dual MRP, for which actions have been taken by the State Governments. (ii) To safeguard the interest of consumers advisory has been issued to all State Governments to ensure all declarations including MRP on all medical devices.
- **(iii) The permission** relaxing the manner of declaration of the retail sale price was granted vide order No. WM-10(54)/2016 dated 04.12.2017, in respect of Single Brand retail trading entities, which has been extended upto 31.07.2019.
- **(iv) Advisory was issued** to the Controllers of Legal Metrology of all States/ UTs for compliance of Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 for sale/ distribution of edible vegetable oil including blended edible vegetable oil.
- **Action taken to stop fraudulent practices in Petrol/ Diesel dispensers:** (1) E-sealing: To prevent the manipulation in petrol/ diesel dispensing units, e-sealing has been introduced at petrol/ diesel retail outlets on pilot basis with the officers of Legal Metrology of State Governments, representatives of Oil Marketing Companies, Original Equipment Manufacturers and Central Government Legal Metrology Officers.
- **The OMCs are also asked to upgrade the existing Dispensers for the following features:** (i) To have the facility of generating OTP for any Hardware Change, Pulser validation and Calibration. (ii) To change the existing pulser with non-openable, self destructive potted magnetic pulser (iii) To have family integrity (iv) To upgrade the software encryption.
- **The permission** was granted to install the Vapour Recovery System for green environment and to reduce the petrol vapours at the Retail Outlets.
- **Time Dissemination:** Ø To enable dissemination of Indian Standard Time in the country, budget provision has been made by this Department for the dissemination of the same through the five Regional Reference Standards Laboratories located at Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad and Guwahati with the cooperation of NPL.
- **Ø There are seven base units** for any quantitative measurement, which in the international systems of units (SI unit) are kilogram for mass, meter for length, second for time, Ampere for electric current, Kelvin for temperature, Candela for light intensity and mole for amount of substance. Provisions for units of weights and measures are provided under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009.
- **Ø In India, dissemination of Time**, one of the seven base units, is being maintained at only one level which is at NPL, New Delhi. The Group of Secretaries on Science & Technology, constituted by the Cabinet Secretariat in 2016, recommend that, "Presently, Indian Standard Time (IST) is not being adopted mandatorily by all Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and 'Internet Service Providers' (ISPs). Non-uniformity of time across different systems creates problems in investigation of cybercrime by the law enforcement agencies (LEAs). Hence, synchronisation of all networks and computers within the country with a national clock is a must, especially for the real time applications in strategic sector and national security.
- **Ø Accurate time dissemination** as well as precise time synchronization has significant impact on all societal, industrial, strategic and many other sectors like monitoring of the power grid failures, international trade, banking systems, automatic signalling in road & railways, weather forecasting, disaster managements, searching for natural resources under the earth's crust requires robust, reliable and accurate timing systems.

Price Stabilization Fund (PSF)

- **Buffer stock** of upto 20.50 lakh tonnes of pulses built through domestic procurement and import for effective market intervention to stabilize their prices.
- **As on date**, 3.77 lakh MT of pulses are available in the buffer after disposal of 16.73 lakh MT from 20.50 lakh tonnes, of which 3.79 lakh tonnes was imported and 16.71 lakh tonnes was procured domestically. Of 16.71 lakh tonnes procured domestically, 13.67 lakh tonnes was procured at MSP during 2016-17 and 2017-18, benefitting around 8.49 lakhs farmers. Procurement and import of Onions undertaken through NAFED, SFAC and MMTC for stabilising prices of onions.
- **Domestic procurement** of 13,508 MT of Onions took place under PSF in 2018-19. Domestic procurement of 5,131 MT onion took place in 2017-18 Pulses from the buffer are being utilized for supply to States for distribution under their schemes; Ministries/Departments of Central Government having schemes with nutrition component as well as those providing hospitality services either directly or through Private Agencies.
- **In addition**, pulses from the buffer are being utilized to meet the requirement of pulses by Army and Central Para-military Forces. Food Aid has also been provided to Afghanistan as well as towards Flood-relief measures undertaken in Kerala. Pulses are also being disposed through auction in Market. These interventions, inter-alia, ensured that prices of pulses and onions remain at reasonable level throughout the year.
- **Strengthening of Price Monitoring Cell(PMC):** From financial year 2018-19 onward, for Strengthening of Price Monitoring Cell (PMC) at State level, new items of funding support have been added. These comprise remuneration for a contractual employee at the level of Data Entry Operator (DEO) and provision of a handheld device with geotagging facilities for price collection along with a simcard for the said device.

Consumer Protection Unit

- **The Consumer Protection Bill 2018** has been introduced in the Parliament on 5th January, 2018 in the Parliament. The bill provides for the following:-
- **i) Strengthening the existing Act ii) Faster redressal of Consumer Grievances iii) Empowering Consumers and iv) Modernizing legislation to keep pace with ongoing change in market.**

Indian harvest festivals

- **Various festivals being celebrated across the Nations:** Makar Sankranti: The festival of Makar Sankranti is being celebrated today when the Sun enters the Makar zodiac and the days begin to lengthen compared to nights.
- **Pongal:** In South India and particularly in Tamil Nadu, it's the festival of Pongal which is being celebrated over 4 days at harvest time.
- **Magha Bihu:** In Assam and many parts of the North East, the festival of Magha Bihu is celebrated. It sees the first harvest of the season being offered to the gods along with prayers for peace and prosperity. Uttarayan: Gujarat celebrates it in the form of the convivial kite festival of Uttarayan.
- **Maghi:** In Punjab, Makar Sankranti is celebrated as Maghi. Bathing in a river in the early hours on Maghi is important. Saaji: In Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh, Makara Sankranti is known as Magha Saaji. Saaji is the Pahari word for Sankranti, start of the new month. Hence this day marks the start of the month of Magha. Kicheri: The festival is known as Kicheri in Uttar Pradesh and involves ritual bathing.
- **Outside India:** Shakrain is an annual celebration of winter in Bangladesh, observed with the flying of kites. Maghe Sankranti is a Nepalese festival observed on the first of Magh in the Bikram Samwat Hindu Solar Nepali calendar (about 14 January).

Devadasi system

- **More than** thirty-six years after the Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act of 1982 was passed, the State government is yet to issue the rules for administering the law.
- **Concerns- highlights of the study:** Vulnerable population: Special children, with physical or mental disabilities, are more vulnerable to be dedicated as devadasis. Girls from socio-economically marginalised communities continued to be victims of the custom, and thereafter were forced into the commercial sex racket. The devadasi system continues to receive customary sanction from families and communities.
- **Reporting of cases** pertaining to the custom under the Karnataka law is very low, with only four cases filed between 2011 and 2017. The law is used sparingly, and focuses on prosecution (including of the victims themselves) with no framework for rehabilitation.
- **Loopholes:** Despite sufficient evidence of the prevalence of the practice and its link to sexual exploitation, recent legislations such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012, and Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act of 2015 have not made any reference to it as a form of sexual exploitation of children. Dedicated children are also not explicitly recognised as children in need of care and protection under JJ Act, despite the involvement of family and relatives in their sexual exploitation.
- **India's extant** immoral trafficking prevention law or the proposed Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018, also do not recognise these dedicated girls as victims of trafficking for sexual purposes. The State's failure to enhance livelihood sources for weaker sections of society fuels the continuation of the practice.
- **What is Devadasi system?** Devadasi system is a religious practice whereby parents marry a daughter to a deity or a temple. The marriage usually occurs before the girl reaches puberty. In recent decades, the practice has been used to push young girls into prostitution. While various state governments have enacted laws to stop such practices, the tradition remains entrenched in some parts of the country, especially some southern states.

- **Laws prohibiting its practice:** The practice of Devadasi system in any form is in total contravention of the provisions of Section 370 and 370A as amended through Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 as well as Section 372 of Indian Penal Code. It is also against Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act.
- **Need of the hour:** Enhance livelihood sources for weaker sections of society. More inclusive socio-economic development. A legislative overhaul and a more pro-active role from State agencies.

District mineral foundations

- **About DMFs:** DMFs were instituted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Act 2015 as non-profit trusts to work for the interest and benefit of persons and areas affected by mining-related operations.
- **The objective** of District Mineral Foundation is to work for the interest of the benefit of the persons and areas affected mining related operations in such manner as may be prescribed by the State Government. Jurisdiction: Its manner of operation comes under the jurisdiction of the relevant State Government.
- **The various state** DMF rules and the Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) guidelines stipulate some "high priority" issues for DMFs, including:
 - **Drinking water.** Health Women and child welfare. Education Livelihood and skill development. Welfare of aged and disabled. Sanitation
- **Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY):** The programme is meant to provide for the welfare of areas and people affected by mining related operations, using the funds generated by District Mineral Foundations (DMFs).
- **Objectives of the scheme:** To implement various developmental and welfare projects/programs in mining affected areas that complement the existing ongoing schemes/projects of State and Central Government.
- **To minimize/mitigate** the adverse impacts, during and after mining, on the environment, health and socio-economics of people in mining districts. To ensure long-term sustainable livelihoods for the affected people in mining areas.

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.
- **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.

Raisina Dialogue

- **“Fair Value for Innovation”:** The United States Chamber of Commerce’s Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) launched a new innovation initiative at the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.
- **The initiative**, titled “Fair Value for Innovation”, would enable breakthrough innovation, and explore how policymakers can harness innovation capital in India and around the globe through research, advocacy, partnerships, and programs.
- **About the Raisina Dialogue:** This is an annual geo-political event, organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and Observer Research Foundation (ORF). It is designed to explore prospects and opportunities for Asian integration as well as Asia’s integration with the larger world. It is predicated on India’s vital role in the Indian Ocean Region and how India along with its partners can build a stable regional and world order.
- **Participants:** The conference is a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral meeting involving policy and decision-makers, including but not limited to Foreign, Defence and Finance Ministers of different countries, high-level government officials and policy practitioners, leading personalities from business and industry, and members of the strategic community, media and academia.
- **Significance of the event:** The Raisina Dialogue was born in 2016, in the belief that the Asian century that the world was talking about was not about any exclusive geographical region. It was rather about the engagement of global actors with Asia and of Asia with the world. So this dialogue took birth as a platform, where the old and the new could work together, to discover their connections, their inter-dependence.

Crocodile Census

- **Findings:** The population of the saltwater or estuarine crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) has increased in the water bodies of Odisha’s Bhitarkanika National Park and its nearby areas in Kendrapara district.
- **1,742 individuals** have been recorded in this year’s annual reptile census. The increase in population was primarily due to the far-sighted measures of the government.
- **Back to Basics:** There are three species of crocodilians—saltwater, Mugger and Gharial.
- **Mugger:** The mugger crocodile, also called the Indian crocodile, or marsh crocodile, is found throughout the Indian subcontinent. It is listed as vulnerable by IUCN. The mugger is mainly a freshwater species, and found in lakes, rivers and marshes.
- **Gharial:** The Gharial or fish eating crocodile is native to the Indian subcontinent. It is listed as a Critically Endangered by IUCN. Small released populations are present and increasing in the rivers of the National Chambal Sanctuary, Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Son River Sanctuary and the rainforest biome of Mahanadi in Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary, Orissa.
- **Saltwater Crocodile:** It is the largest of all living reptiles. It listed as least concern by IUCN. It is found throughout the east coast of India.
- **Crocodile conservation programmes in India:** The Gharial and Saltwater crocodile conservation programme was first implemented in Odisha in early 1975 and subsequently the Mugger conservation programme was initiated, since Odisha is having distinction for existence of all the three species of Indian crocodilians. The funds and technical support for the project came from UNDP/ FAO through the Government of India. ‘BAULA’ PROJECT AT DANGAMAL: ‘Baula’ is the Oriya term for Saltwater Crocodile. Dangmal is in Bhitarkanika sanctuary.
- **MUGGER PROJECT AT RAMATIRTHA:** The Ramatirtha center, in Odisha, is meant for Mugger crocodiles. GHARIAL PROJECT AT TIKARPADA, Odisha. CAPTIVE BREEDING OF CROCODILES AT NANDANKANAN, Odisha.

Odisha celebrates 1st Turtle Festival in Puri

- **Organised by:** Cox & Kings Foundation in association with Humane Society International/India and Action for Protection of Wild Animals (APOWA).
- **Need of the hour:** Odisha has half of the world’s Olive Ridley turtle population and 90% of India’s turtle population lives in the state. Despite that no actions have been taken for their conservation. Therefore, the government should develop some infrastructure near the turtle nesting sites at Devi and Rusikulya rivers, the two major nesting grounds.

- **Back to Basics:** There are five species in Indian waters — Leatherback (Vulnerable), Loggerhead (Endangered), Hawksbill (Critically Endangered), Green (Endangered) and Olive Ridley. In India, sea turtles are protected under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. The Olive ridley turtles are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world, inhabiting warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- **The Olive ridley** is the most numerous among the sea turtles found in India and is well known for its arribadas, or annual mass nestings when thousands of turtles migrate to the breeding ground to nest simultaneously. Recognized as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red list. International trade in these turtles and their products is banned under CITES Appendix I.
- **'Operation Kachhapa':** Conservation of the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle was launched by the Wildlife Protection Society of India in collaboration with the Orissa State Forest Department and the Wildlife Society of Orissa and other local NGOs.
- **To reduce** accidental killing in India, the Orissa government has made it mandatory for trawls to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), a net specially designed with an exit cover which allows the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.

Hawaiian tree snail is the first extinction of 2019:

- **Context:** George, the last known *Achatinella apexfulva*- a Hawaiian tree snail, died on New Year's Day 2019, making his species the first to be declared officially extinct in 2019.
- **Delhi govt plans to start bird hospitals:** Context: In a first, the government of Delhi has proposed a specialised treatment facility for birds in the National Capital Territory, as part of its Animal Health and Welfare Policy 2018. This setup would be developed in all the districts of Delhi in order to provide high-end specialized referral clinical support and treatment to the birds.
- **PM Narendra Modi receives first ever Philip Kotler Presidential Award:** Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded first ever Philip Kotler Presidential Award. He was selected for his outstanding leadership for the nation.
- **The Philip Kotler** Presidential Award recognises and celebrates achievements of organisations, marketing teams, and individuals in different industries around the world. Philip Kotler is a world renowned Professor of Marketing at Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management.



Year End Review-2018: Ministry of Textiles Zero defect, Zero Effect - Mantra of Textiles Ministry Ministry of Textiles Striving to Promote Production, Employment and Exports Ministry Working on Promotion of Technical Textiles

- **Textiles industry** in India is one of the largest in the world with a huge raw material base and manufacturing strength across all value chains. The strength of India's textiles industry lies both in the hand woven sector as well as mill sector.
- **Traditional sectors** like handloom, handicrafts and small scale power loom are the biggest source of employment for millions of people in rural and semi-urban areas. This industry contributes to 7% of industrial output in value terms, 2% of India's GDP and 15% of the country's export earnings.
- **"Today's competitive world demands** quick- time response in shaping initiatives to address the challenges of growth and converting them into opportunities.
- **To this end**, the Ministry of Textiles has been working relentlessly to ensure a conducive policy environment, facilitating enabling editions for the industry and private entrepreneurs to set up units through its various policy initiatives and schemes."

SILK INDUSTRY

- **Integrated Scheme** for Development of Silk Industry: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the Central Sector Scheme "Integrated Scheme for Development of Silk Industry" for three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20. The Scheme has four components:
 - **Research & Development (R&D), training, transfer of technology and IT initiatives** Seed organizations and farmers' extension centres
 - **Coordination and market development** for seed, yarn and silk products and Quality Certification System (QCS) by creating amongst others a chain of silk testing facilities, farm based & post-cocoon technology up-gradation, and export brand promotion.
 - **The story of silk begins with cocoons** The scheme with a total allocation of Rs.2161.68 crore is expected to increase the silk production from the level of 30348 MTs during 2016-17 to 38500 MTs by the end of 2019-20 with the following interventions:
 - **Production of import** substitute bivoltine silk to the tune of 8500 MTs per annum by 2020.
 - **R&D to improve productivity** from the present level of 100 Kgs to 111 kgs of silk per hectare of plantation by the end of 2019-20.
 - **Large scale propagation** of improved reeling machines (automatic reeling machine for mulberry, improved reeling and spinning machineries and Buniyaad reeling machines for Vanya silk) under Make in India programme to produce quality silk to cater to the market demand.
 - **The scheme will promote** women empowerment and livelihood opportunities for SC and ST and other weaker sections of the society. It will help to increase productive employment from 85 lakhs to 1 crore persons by 2020. The scheme aims to achieve self-sufficiency in silk production by 2022.
 - **To achieve this**, production of high grade silk in India will reach 20,650 MTs by 2022 from the current level of 11,326 MTs thereby reducing imports to Zero. It is proposed to increase 4A grade silk from the current level of 15% to 25 % of mulberry production by 2020.
 - **The implementation strategy** is clearly based on convergence at the State level with the schemes of other Ministers like MGNREGS of Rural Development, RKVY & PMKSY of Ministry of Agriculture, for maximizing benefits to the sericulturists.
 - **The R&D projects** pertaining to disease resistant silkworm, host plant improvements, productivity enhancing tools and implements for reeling and waving will be done in cooperation with Ministries of Science and Technology, Agriculture and Human Resource Development (HRD).

New Races of Silk Worm Seed:

- **Central Silk Board (CSB)** has notified newly developed races of silkworm seed of mulberry and Vanya silk for increasing the productivity of cocoons and to increase the income of the farmers engaged in sericulture. Silk worm breeds for specific agro-climatic condition are essential for increasing the productivity of cocoons.
- **Tropical Tasar Silkworm (BDR-10)race** developed have 21% more productivity than the traditional Daba breed. Farmers can get upto 52 kg cocoons per 100 disease free layings (dfis). This silkworm breed will help the tribal farmers of Jharkhand, Chattishgarh, Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Maharastra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Multivoltine x Bivoltine Mulberry hybrid(PM x FC2)race** of silkworm can produce 60 kg per 100 Dfls and the race is better than earlier race PM x CSR. Due to high quality silk and significant egg recovery, this race is suitable for the farmers of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Maharashtra.
- **Erisilkworm (C2)race** can produce 247 numbers of Eri cocoons per 100 Dfls. This is suitable for the farmers in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Maharastra, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.
- **Central Silk Board** under the Ministry of Textiles is engaged in applied research for developing new breeds of races of silkworm seed and conducts extensive field trial before commercial use in the field.

INTEGRATED SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (ISDS):

- **'Samarth'- Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector:** Union Minister of Textiles, SmritiZubinIrani, chaired a meeting of stakeholders on Samarth – Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector under the Skill India Mission in May, 2018 in New Delhi, to familiarize the stakeholders about the scheme and its guidelines. The broad objective of the new scheme is to skill the youth for gainful and sustainable employment in the textiles sector covering the entire value chain of textiles, excluding spinning and weaving.
- **The concerns of the stakeholders** and challenges faced by them during implementation of the previous scheme were discussed in the meeting. Feedback from the concerned stakeholders on how the scheme can contribute and benefit the textiles industry and boost skill development was also discussed.
- **The guidelines of the scheme** were released on 23rd of April 2018. The scheme was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on 20th of December 2017 with an outlay of Rs. 1300 crore. It is intended to provide demand driven, placement oriented National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant skilling programmes to incentivize and supplement the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the textiles sector. The scheme targets to train 10 lakh persons (9 lakh in organised and 1 lakh in traditional sector) over a period of 3 years (2017-20).
- **The Integrated Skill Development Scheme (ISDS)** was introduced by the Ministry of Textiles as a pilot scheme in the last two years of XI Five Year Plan (FYP) with an outlay of Rs. 272 crore, including Rs. 229 crore as Government contribution with a physical target to train 2.56 lakh persons. The scheme was scaled up as main phase during the XIIth FYP with an allocation of Rs. 1,900 crore to train 15 lakh persons.
- **The ISDS** addresses the critical gap of skilled manpower in textile industry through industry-oriented training programmes. It is implemented through three components where major thrust is given to PPP mode where a partnership has been developed with the industry in establishing a demand-driven skilling ecosystem. The scheme has been largely aligned with the common norms of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.

Skill Development in Textiles sector

- **Total 11,14,545 persons** were trained under the scheme mainly in apparel and garmenting (86%) with total expenditure of Rs. 935.17 crore, of which 8,43,082 persons (75.64%) were given employment in the textile sector. Out of the persons trained in last 4 years, more than 70% were women, 22.69% were from SC category and 7.22% were from ST Category.
- **Making a Difference Through Skilling:** Textiles sectors employs over 45 million people. Additional requirement of about 17 million by the year 2022.

- **In the last four years** 8.58 lakh persons trained in partnership with 58 Government and industry partners. The Samarth guidelines have been issued on 23.04.2018 and RFP for empanelment of Implementing Partners has been floated on 21.05.2018.

HANDLOOM SECTOR A weaver working at her loom Block Level Clusters (BLCs):

- **Block Level Clusters (BLCs)** are one of the components of National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)/Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS). 412 BLCs covering 3,18,347 beneficiaries have been sanctioned since July, 2015 with project cost of Rs. 557.59 crore. Rs. 212.77 crore has been released as Central share. Financial assistance is provided upto Rs.2.00 crore per cluster for various interventions like skill up-gradation, HathkarghaSamvardhanSahayata, product and design development, construction of workshed, lighting unit and setting up of Common Facility Centre (CFC). Besides, financial assistance upto Rs.50.00 lakh is available for setting up of one dye house at district level.
- **Weaver Mudra Scheme:** Under the Weaver Mudra Scheme, credit at concessional interest rate of 6% is being provided to the handloom weavers. Margin money assistance to a maximum of Rs. 10,000 per weaver and credit guarantee for a period of 3 years is also provided. 81,615 MUDRA loans worth Rs. 443.52 crore have been sanctioned under the scheme. MUDRA platform adopted in September, 2016 for providing concessional credit. Procedure for loan application on MUDRA platform is user friendly for withdrawal of loan amount using RuPay card through ATMs.
- **Handloom Weaver Mudra Portal:** This portal is operation from 1st of April, 2017, in association with Punjab National Bank to cut down delays in disbursement of funds for financial assistance. Bank claims worth Rs. 25 crore have been settled through this portal. Participating banks submit the claim for margin money, interest subvention and credit guarantee fee on the portal and the margin money is transferred directly to loan account of the weaver and interest subvention and credit guarantee fee is transferred to banks in electronic mode.
- **India Handloom Brand:** Sales of handloom products to the tune of Rs.582.93 crore has been generated as on 31.10.2018. 1185 registrations have been issued under 122 product categories. The India Handloom Brand was launched by the Prime Minister on First National Handloom Day on 7th August 2015 for branding of high quality handloom products, authentic designs with zero defect and zero effect on environment.
- **BunkarMitra:** A toll free helpline no. 18002089988 was set up to deal with queries of handloom weavers. 22,033 queries of handloom weavers concerning wide range of issues like technical, supply of raw material, quality control, credit facility, access to market linkages were resolved upto 30.11.2018 through the BunkarMitra Helpline. The Helpline, set up in April 2017, provides single point contact to handloom weavers across the country for addressing their professional queries 7 days a week. Services are available through toll-free number in seven languages: Hindi, English, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Assamese and Kannada.
- **Common Service Centres (CSCs):** MoU was signed on 7th August 2017 with M/s CSC e- Governance Services India Limited to set up Common Service Centres (CSCs) to provide IT-enabled services, including e-commerce. Each CSC is set up @Rs. 3,78,400/- in handloom pockets, clusters and 28 Weavers' Service Centres (WSCs). Of 162 CSCs sanctioned so far, 129 CSCs are functional.
- **Handlooms Promotion through e-Marketing:** To promote e-marketing of handloom products, 21 e-commerce entities have been engaged for on – line marketing of handloom products. So far, total sales of Rs. 21.25 crores have been generated.
- **To empower the weavers,** and their families for career progression, memorandums of Understanding signed with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Ministry is providing reimbursement of 75% of the fee in NIOS/IGNOU courses for SC, ST, BPL and women learners.

POWERLOOM SECTOR

- **A comprehensive scheme** for power loom sector development 'PowerTex' India with an outlay of Rs.487.07 crore was launched all over the country in January 2017. The component wise achievements till November 2018 are:
- **In-situ Upgradation** of Plain Powerlooms: 197775 looms were upgraded and Rs.248.77 crores released. Group Workshed Scheme (GWS):1034 projects approved and Rs.85.64 crores released. Yarn Bank Scheme:73 Yarn Bank projects approved and Rs.23.263 crores released. Common Facility Centre (CFC):20 projects have been approved and Rs.3.944 crores released.
- **Facilitation, IT, Awareness,** Market Development and Publicity for PowerLoom Schemes: Rs.15.779 crores released. Tex Venture Capital Fund:Rs.9.34 crore has been disbursed by SVCL to four companies so far.

- **Grant-in-Aid** to Powerloom Service Centres:Rs.22.99 crores released. Modernisation of Powerloom Service Centres: Rs.3.39 crores released. A dedicated website www.ipowertexindia.gov.in has been launched for applying various scheme under PowerTex India.
- **Online portal** and mobile app operational from 1.12.2017. Beneficiary can track the status online on Mobile app.
- **A worker** operating the power loom

SCHEME FOR INTEGRATED TEXTILE PARK (SITP)

- **The scheme has been extended** and notified for the period from 2017 to 2020. Total 65 textile parks.
- **20 new textile parks** have been sanctioned in the last four years from 2014-18. These 20 parks will be facilitating investment up to Rs.6834 crores and generating employment for approximately 65,000 people. A total of 21 parks have been completed till date, out of which, 5 parks have been completed in the last four years (2014-18).
- **INTEGRATED PROCESSING DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (IPDS):** The scheme has been extended and notified for the period from 2017 to 2020. Six projects have been approved during the last 4 years, providing relief to about 1400 SME units and promoting 'zero effect' in textile processing.
- **TECHNOLOGY UPGRADATION FUND SCHEME (TUFS)** Amended TUFS (ATUFS) launched for the period of 2016-2022
- **Outlay Rs 17,822 crore** including committed liabilities of previous schemes Guidelines modified on 02.08.2018 to make I-TUFS an end to end solution
- **AMENDED TECHNOLOGY UPGRADATION FUND SCHEME (ATUFS)** 6,468 UIDs issued under ATUFS. Projected investment- Rs. 24,338.75 crores. Projected Subsidy value Rs.1,795.50 crores. Total subsidy released Rs. 8156 crores.

HANDICRAFT SECTOR Pehchan cards being distributed to weavers in Madhya Pradesh

- **'Under Pehchan' initiative, 22.40 lakhs** applications were received and 17.83 lakhs I.D. cards have been distributed. This initiative was launched on 7th October, 2016 to register and provide Aadhar based Identity Cards to the Handicrafts Artisans for better access to the benefits of the schemes. New Mega Clusters have been sanctioned at Bareilly, Lucknow and Kutch with an outlay of Rs. 28.5 crores each and at J&K with an outlay of Rs. 20.00 crores and activities underway.
- **In the project of linking Textiles** with Tourism, Raghurajpur in Odisha and Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh were taken up for overall development as tourist destinations.
- **Special projects have been sanctioned** for Integrated Development and Promotion of Handicrafts in Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Bihar, Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) to benefit 1,58,805 artisans.
- **New Urban Haats sanctioned** at a project cost of Rs. 3.00 crores each, at Mammallapuram (Chennai) and Eluru (Andhra Pradesh).

Programmes Conducted and Artisans Benefitted during Last Four and Half Years:

- **Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana:** 435 programme organized amounting to Rs 58.40 Crores benefiting 306583 artisans. Design and Technology Upgradation: 756 programme organized amounting to Rs. 53.33 Crores benefiting 29570 artisans.
- **Marketing Support and Services:** 788 programme organized amounting to Rs 87.61 Crores benefiting 58526 artisans. Human Resource Development: 2182 Training programme organized amounting to Rs 93.07 Crores benefiting 46481 artisans.

- **Research and Development:** 702 programme organized amounting to Rs 23.39 Crores benefiting 17550 artisans.
- **Direct Benefit to Artisans:** Rs 58.40 Crores sanctioned benefiting 478089 artisans. Infrastructure & Technology Support: Rs 98.76 Crores sanctioned to provide infrastructural support.
- **Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development (Mega Cluster):** Rs. 226.65 Crores sanctioned benefiting 71915 artisans. Hastkala Sahyog Shivirs organized at 302 places all over the country, in which 73291 artisans participated.
- **5155 tool kits** distributed, 814 Mudra Loan sanctioned, 695 marketing events were organized during the camp during the financial year 2017-18.
- **Handicrafts Awards** to 23 Shilp Gurus and 65 National Awardees (including 15 Women artisans) have been given to Handicraft artisans since 2014 to 2016.
- **The new component** of Margin Money has been approved in the month of October 2018, introduced for implementation for the benefit of artisans availing Mudra Loan @ 20% of the sanctioned loan amount subject to a maximum of Rs.10,000.
- **Promotion of Handicrafts:** To celebrate birth anniversaries of Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Govindro Phule, 24 marketing events were organized for SC/ST artisans from 11th to 17th April 2018 in different parts of the country benefitting approximately 1000 SC/ST artisans

Artisans making handcrafted items Promotion of Carpet weaving: Carpet weaving in Kashmir

- **Cluster – based approach** – training is organized for 4 months in traditional carpet weaving belts such as Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir.
- **Common Facility Centre** with warehouses for storing raw material, office with internet facilities, restroom and training shed at a cost of about Rs. 50 lakh for a group of artisans.
- **The Carpets Export Promotion Council** is implementing this with the help of the National Centre for Design and Product Development (NCDPD), New Delhi.
- **Export of Handicraft Products:** Export of handicraft products increased from Rs.20082.54 crores in 2014-15 to Rs 22916 crores in 2017-18. Exports of carpet increased from Rs 8441.95 crores in 2014-15 to Rs. 9205.90 crores in 2017-18.
- **VISA EXEMPTION TO FOREIGN DESIGNERS IN HANDICRAFTS SECTOR** Handicrafts sector has been exempted from minimum salary condition (Rs. 16.25 lakhs per annum) for grant of employment visa to foreign designers for a period of 2 years i.e. till 30.06.2020. Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) had sought the intervention of Union Minister of Textiles for getting the exemption from the minimum salary condition for grant of employment visa to foreign designers. The Textiles Minister's prompt action to obtain the exemption for handicrafts sector will help the exporters to hire international designers as per their requirement and develop products in sync with international trends.

COTTON MSP Operation of Seed Cotton (Kapas)

- **To ensure remunerative** prices to cotton farmers, Government fixes Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of seed cotton (kapas) every year.
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** of cotton for Crop Season 2018-19 has been increased by Rs. 1,130/- per quintal over last year.
- **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** is the Central Nodal Agency for undertaking Price Support Operations of Cotton.
- **CCI undertakes** MSP Operation when market rate of seed cotton falls below the MSP rates.
- **COTTON CORPORATION OF INDIA (CCI) CCI has put in place many innovative measures:** Adopted ERP system 'PRAGTI' to enable the CCI with fast access of all the important information of its branches and corporate office.
- **Developed computer** based programme for identification of cotton farmers. Initiated 100% online payment directly in the account of cotton farmers to ensure the full benefit of MSP and to avoid middlemen.

- **Developed farmer** friendly mobile app 'Cott-Ally' to keep the cotton farmer informed about policy initiatives in respect of cotton and steps taken by CCI for implementation of MSP.
- **CCI commenced** the 100% sales of Lint cotton bales and cotton seed through online e-auction system.
- **Developed warehouse** management system for online stock management.
- **Started monitoring** the branch operations/meeting with the branch heads through video conferencing in order to save time and money. Adopted 100% cashless transactions.

Revival of National Textile Corporation (NTC):

- **With net worth** turning positive, NTC ceased to be a sick company and came out of the purview of Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). As on 31st March 2018 its net worth stood at Rs. 1,885.87 crore.
- **Promotion of Wool Sector:** Pashmina shawl from Kashmir
- **A total grant** of Rs.41.47 crore released under Pashmina Scheme for 4 years. (2014-15 to 2017-18) Foundation stock of animals distributed to 340 families in Leh and Kargil. Distributed 459 high quality Pashmina bucks for breed improvement. Health coverage and medicines to 2 lakh Pashmina goats annually and feed supplement was given to 40,000 goats annually.
- **Strengthened 3** breeding farms & 3 fodder banks and established 3 pasture farms on migratory routes. Pashmina productivity per goat enhanced by 9.30%. Provided 775 tents and 100 houses for nomads in Ladakh region.
- **Five solarized** community centres constructed. Benefitted 40 lakh sheep under 'Sheep & Wool Improvement Scheme' (SWIS) under "Health Care" to animals.

JUTE SECTOR

- **Bundles of Jute Fiber in a jute mill** The Ministry has launched "Scheme for Research and Development for the Textile Industry including Jute" for a period of five year from 2014-15 to 2018-19 with a financial outlay of Rs. 149 Crore. The Scheme has three basic components:
- **Component - I :** Research and Development in Textiles and allied Sector (Financial Outlay Rs. 50 Crore) Component – II : Promotion of R&D in Jute Sector; Transfer of technologies and dissemination activities in jute sector (Financial Outlay : Rs. 80 Crore) Component – III : Benchmarking studies, Knowledge dissemination and promoting green initiatives through R&D (Financial Outlay: Rs. 15 Crore)
- **Financial support :** In case of any of the above 3 components, for applied Research, the Scheme has provision of funding upto 70% of the total project cost and balance would have to be arranged by the respective Project Executing Agency. Similarly, for basic research, 100% funding shall be provided under the Scheme.
- **Extension of Norms for Mandatory Packaging in Jute Materials:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs accorded its approval to expand the scope of mandatory packaging norms under the Jute Packaging Material (JPM) Act, 1987 as follows:
- **100% of the food grains and 20%** of the sugar will be mandatorily packed in diversified jute bags. The decision to pack sugar in diversified jute bags will give an impetus to the diversification of the jute industry. Initially 10% of the indents of jute bags for packing foodgrains will be placed through reverse auction on the GeM portal. This will gradually usher in a regime of price discovery.
- **The decision will give a fillip** to the development of jute sector in increasing the quality and productivity of raw jute, diversification of jute sector and also boosting and sustaining demand for jute product.
- **The jute industry is predominantly** dependent on Government sector which purchases jute bags of value of more than Rs. 6,500 crore every year for packing foodgrains. This is done in order to sustain the core demand for the jute sector and to support the livelihood of the workers and farmers dependent on the sector.

- **The decision will** benefit farmers and workers located in the Eastern and North Eastern regions of the country particularly in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura. Nearly 3.7 lakh workers and several lakh farm families are dependent for their livelihood on the jute sector.

Government support to the Jute Sector:

- **In order to improve** the productivity and quality of raw jute through a carefully designed intervention, called the Jute ICARE, the Government has been supporting close to one lakh jute farmers by disseminating improved agronomic practices such as line sowing using seed drills, weed management by using wheel-hoeing and nail-weeders, distribution of quality certified seeds and also providing microbial assisted retting. These interventions have resulted in enhancing the quality and productivity of raw jute and increasing income of jute farmers by Rs. 10,000 per hectare.
- **To support jute farmers**, Jute Corporation of India (JCI) has been given a grant of Rs. 100 crore for 2 years starting from 2018-19 to enable it to conduct MSP operations and ensure price stabilization in the jute sector.
- **The National Jute Board** has collaborated with National Institute of Design to support diversification of jute sector and a Jute Design Cell has been opened at Gandhinagar. Further, promotion of Jute Geo Textiles and Agro-Textiles has been taken up with the State Governments particularly those in the North Eastern region and also with departments such as Ministry of Road Transport and Ministry of Water Resources.
- **With a view to boost** demand in the jute sector, Government of India has imposed Definitive Anti-Dumping Duty on import of jute goods from Bangladesh and Nepal with effect from 5th January, 2017. As a result of these measures, 13 Twine mills in Andhra Pradesh have resumed operation, benefitting 20,000 workers. Further, imposition of Definitive Anti-Dumping Duty has provided scope for an additional demand of 2 lakh MT of jute goods in the domestic market for the Indian jute industry.
- **With a view** to promoting transparency in jute sector, Jute SMART, an e-govt initiative was launched in December, 2016, providing an integrated platform for procurement of B-Twill sacking by Government agencies. Further, the JCI is transferring 100% funds to jute farmers online for jute procurement under MSP and commercial operations.

TECHNICAL TEXTILES

- **Technical textiles** are textile material and products manufactured primarily for technical performance and functional properties rather than aesthetic and decorative characteristics. They find application not only in clothing but also in areas like agriculture, medical, infrastructure, automotive, aerospace, sports, defence and packaging. Scheme for promoting usage of geotechnical textiles in NER with fund outlay of Rs. 427 crore was launched for the Financial Years 2014-15 to 2018-19
- **54 projects sanctioned** under geotech textiles with an outlay of more than Rs. 105 crores providing quality infrastructure like roads, hill slope protection and efficient water usage by water reservoir lining.
- **Eight centres of excellence**, 11 focus incubation centres, sanctioned, 10 agro-demo centres set up and 200 agro kits distributed in 6 states with an outlay of Rs. 208 crores since 2012-13 till 2016-17 under technology mission on technical textiles.
- **Under the scheme** for promotion of usage of agro textiles, 44 demonstration centres set up, 840 agrotexile kits were distributed to agro farmers after training about 3841 farmers.
- **118 projects** under scheme for research and development for the textiles industry including jute with a total project cost of Rs. 11,042.86 lakhs and Government of India share of Rs. 7,851.86 lakh are being supported for development and better quality textile product.
- **Technotex**, India's premier show on technical textiles was organized in association with FICCI to provide boost to Technical Textiles in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

NORTH EAST REGION TEXTILE PROMOTION SCHEME (NERTPS)

- **This scheme** promotes textiles industry in the North Eastern Region by providing infrastructure, capacity building and marketing support to all segments of textile industry. The scheme has an outlay of Rs. 500 crores during 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- **Woman weaving shawl in Nagaland** Under North East Region Textile Promotion Scheme (NERTPS), 32 sericulture projects are being implemented viz., Integrated Sericulture Development Project (ISDP) and Intensive Bivoltine Sericulture Development Project (IBSDP) covering Mulberry, Eri and Muga sectors in all North East States. The projects aim at holistic development of sericulture in all its spheres from plantation development to production of fabrics with value addition at every stage of production chain.
- **NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FASHION TECHNOLOGY (NIFT)** NIFT students receiving certificates from Textiles Minister
- **Indiasize, a National Sizing Survey** will be conducted by the National Institute of Fashion Technology(NIFT), New Delhi, to develop a comprehensive size chart for ready-to-wear industry based on the body measurements of the Indian population. It is a scientific exercise where anthropometric data will be collected from a sample population in the age group 15 to 65 years to create a database of measurements that will result in a standardized size chart which is representative of the Indian population and can be adopted by the apparel industry. The surveys entail measuring statistically relevant sample size pan country using human safe technology of 3D whole body scanner, a non-contact method of taking body measurements and analyzing the collected data to create size charts.
- **The project will entail measuring** of 25,000 male and female Indians in 6 cities in 6 regions of the country: Kolkata(East), Mumbai(West), New Delhi(North), Hyderabad(Central India), Bengaluru(South) and Shillong (North-East). Using 3D whole body scanners, computers will extract hundreds of measurements from a scan. The data created as part of this project will be confidential and secure. The duration of the project will be around two years from the date of commencement.
- **Providing well-fitting garments** in the absence of standardized size chart is proving to be a big challenge for the domestic textile and apparel industry which is projected to reach USD 123 billion by 2021 and holds 5th position in apparel imports.
- **A large percentage** of shoppers face difficulty in finding clothes that fit perfectly according to their body measurements. The reason is differences in anthropometric built of people in different geographical regions across the country. Till date 14 countries have successfully completed national sizing surveys: USA, Canada, Mexico, UK, France, Spain, Germany, Korea, China and Australia.
- **Indian apparel industry** uses size charts which are tweaked versions of size charts of other countries so returns of the garments are in the range of 20% to 40% and is increasing with the growth of ecommerce and the main reason for returns are poor garment fit.
- **The findings** of the study will impact various other sectors like automotive, aerospace, fitness and sport, art and computer gaming where insights from this data can produce ergonomically designed products which are suited for the Indian population.
- **Capacity Building in Fashion Technology:** The NIFT International Conference based on the theme Rediscovering Culture: Transforming Fashion was held in New Delhi from 31st January to 2nd February 2018 as a milestone in its thirty - year journey.
- **The conference** provided an interdisciplinary platform for trans – global narratives on fashion, culture, textiles, craft and sustainability. A NIFT campus at Srinagar (J&K) opened at a project cost of Rs. 325.36 crore. Foundation stone of a NIFT campus at Panchkula laid.
- **The institute** infrastructure such as academic blocks, administrative blocks, hostels and student centres being augmented at various campuses. NIFT signed MoUs with DC (Handicraft) and DC (Handlooms) for “Cluster Initiatives for symbiotic collaboration in linking handloom clusters with budding fashion professionals.
- **Extension centre** of NIFT set up at Varanasi to train & encourage weavers to revive traditional designs.
- **USTAAD** (Upgradation of Skills and Training in Ancestral Arts/Crafts for Development) project initiated in collaboration with Ministry of Minority Affairs – will encompass 25 handicraft and handloom clusters.
- **Set up a Product Design** Development & Innovation Centre under Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Scheme for Jodhpur Mega Cluster (Handicrafts)
- **Four one – year** Certificate Programmes introduced in Fashion Design Development (CPFDD), Fashion Design and Management (CPFDM), Application of Information Technology in Fashion (CPAIT) and Knitwear Design and Manufacturing (CPKDM) for Ministry of DONER.

Designing of uniform for postal employees, trainees and staff of CITs & CTS. EXPORT PROMOTION INITIATIVES

- **To enhance** exports of textiles including woolen, silk and cellulose fibers from India, the Government has enhanced rates under Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) from 2% to 4% for apparel, 5% to 7% for made-ups, handloom and handicrafts from 1st November 2017.

- **Further**, the Government has enhanced interest equalization rate for pre and post-shipment credit for the textile sector from 3% to 5% from 2nd November, 2018. For the silk sector, Government has introduced Silk Samagra Scheme to promote R&D and brand image of Indian silk at the global level and provide support to beneficiaries from nursery to fabric production stage for improvement in productivity and quality.
- **PACKAGE FOR TEXTILES, APPARELS AND MADE UPS Special Package** Package was designed to create upto one crore jobs, and boost exports (by USD 31 billion) and investment by Rs. 80, 000 crores in 3 years. As on date it has generated potential for 15.68 lakh additional employment with additional exports of Rs. 5,728 crores and additional investments Rs. 25,345 crores.
- **A special package of Rs. 6000** crore was announced in June and December 2016 to boost exports, attract investments and create employment opportunities Entire 12% of employer's Employees Provident Fund (EPF) contribution for apparel and made-ups is borne by Government under Pradhan
- **MantriParidhanRozgarProtsahanYojana (PMPRPY)**. Fixed Term Employment for apparel sector introduced making fixed term workman at par with permanent workman in terms of working hours, wages, allowances and other statutory dues.
- **Outcome oriented Capital** Investment subsidy under ATUFS for apparel and made-ups sector enhanced by 10% Rs. 4,853.6 crore Rebate of State Levies (RoSL) disbursed to exporters as on 15th November, 2018. Rebate of State Levies (RoSL) scheme was announced as part of special package for apparel and made-ups.
- **To boost indigenous** production and Make in India, Government has increased Basic Customs Duty from 10% to 20% on 501 textile products.
- **Strategy to boost exports:** It involves diversification of markets, positioning India in value chain and promoting collaborative exports. Diversify Markets: 12 markets in Vietnam, Indonesia, South Korea, Australia, Egypt, turkey, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia and Peru have been identified.
- **Position India** in Value Chains: Pursue strategic engagement with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka: Fabric-Forward Policy
- **Promote Collaborative exports:** Apparel and Contract textiles Attract investment in textile parks Export traditional garments under G2G initiative
- **Diversify products:** Integrate Indian fabrics into demand for contract textiles Supply jute bags Latin American Country (LAC) retailers Create digital platform for Latin for (LAC) countries Launch National Textiles Mission on Quality and Compliance Strengthen quality and compliance mechanism Develop quality ecosystems @ Rs. 100 crore upto 31.3.2020 Establish warehouses cum display centres: China (Shanghai), Russia (Moscow), LAC (1 in Panama for Columbia and Peru and 1 in Chile) and Saudi Arabia Boost exports through cross-border e-commerce provider

Spiritual circuit in Kerala

- **The Sree Padmanabaswamy** Temple is one of the 108 divyadesams of Lord Vishnu. The project is being implemented under the Swadesh Darshan scheme of the tourism ministry.
- **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.

Womaniya on GeM

- **Key features of the initiative:** The initiative – Womaniya on GeM – seeks to develop women entrepreneurship on the margins of society to achieve gender-inclusive economic growth.
- **The initiative** would enable women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups to sell handicrafts and handloom, jute and coir products, home décor and office furnishings, directly to various government ministries, departments and institutions.
- **Significance and the need for such initiatives:** Nearly 80% women-owned establishments in India are self-financed and more than 60 percent of 8 million units are owned and led by women entrepreneurs from socially-challenged sections.
- **Since women tend** to invest up to 90% of their earnings back in their families to provide better nutrition, health care and education to their children, their economic empowerment is essential for poverty alleviation which would be made possible through Womaniya initiative.
- **Womaniya on GeM** will address goals and objectives under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **About GeM:** It is an online marketplace to facilitate procurement of goods and services by various Ministries and agencies of the Government.
- **The platform offers online**, end to end solution for procurement of commonly used goods and services for all central government departments and state governments, public sector units and affiliated bodies.
- **It aims to enhance transparency**, efficiency and speed in public procurement of goods and services and eliminate corruption.
- **Government e Marketplace** is a 100% government owned company setup under the aegis of Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry for procurement of common use goods and services by Government ministries, departments and CPSEs.

New quota and basic structure

- **The legislation** will be known as the Constitution (103 Amendment) Act, 2019 and it shall come into force on such date as the Centre notifies.
- **The 10% reservation** will be in addition to the existing cap of 50% reservation for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes, taking the total reservation to 60%.
- **124th Constitutional Amendment- This amended two fundamental rights:** Article 15, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, caste, sex or place of birth. Article 16 which prohibits discrimination in employment in government office. It also makes a note of the Article 46, which asks the government to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the society.
- **It provides reservation for:** People who have an annual income of less than Rs.8 lakhs. People who own less than five acres of farm land. People who have a house lesser than 1,000 sq feet in a town (or 100 sq yard in a notified municipal area).
- **Debatable problems:** The major hurdle for the implementation of the recent Act is the legal scrutiny. The Supreme Court has ruled multiple times against exceeding its 1992 formula of a maximum of 50% reservation (Indira Sawhney v. Union of India).
- **However, there are states** like Tamil Nadu that go beyond this limit and the Supreme Court has upheld the state's policy many a time. Presently, the state has a '69 per cent quota system'.
- **What is the basic structure?** The idea of basic structure was originally suggested by Justice M Hidayatullah & Justice J R Mudholkar in Sajjan Singh (1965). It has been borrowed from Germany.
- **In Kesavananda Bharati (1973)**, the Supreme Court held that Parliament can amend the Constitution but does not have power to destroy it — no amendment can change its "basic structure". The court said that under Article 368, something must remain of the original Constitution that the new amendment would amend.
- **However**, the court did not define what basic structure is, 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.
- **Does it violate fundamental rights?** From the Poona Pact (1932) between M K Gandhi and Dr B R Ambedkar to the Constituent Assembly debates, reservation was talked about in the context of social backwardness of classes.

- **The 124th Amendment** makes a departure by extending reservation to the economically disadvantaged. Article 15(4), inserted by the First Amendment in 1951, enables the state to make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes.
- **Article 16(4)** permits reservation for any backward class if it is not adequately represented in services under the state. Thus, reservation is not a right but, if granted, it will not be considered a violation of the right to equality.
- **Article 46 and the upper caste:** 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".
- **While the 124th Amendment** mentions Article 46 in its statement and objects, it seems the government overlooked the fact that upper castes neither face social injustice nor are subjected to any form of exploitation.
- **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.
- **Way ahead:** Equality in India has been held to be the very essence of democracy and rule of law. While equality permits reasonable classifications, these are to be based on intelligible differentia, should have rational objects to achieve and should not be fanciful and arbitrary.
- **In this case,** the court has to examine the equality code of the Constitution and whether the state has considered and valued the circumstances justifying it, to make reservation. This would require that the state's decision is rational and non-arbitrary. The state has to show quantifiable data to satisfy the court as to inadequacy of representation of economically backward classes.

Citizenship Bill and Chakma and Hajong communities

- **What's the issue?** The Citizenship Bill seeks to grant citizenship to six minority communities — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians — without valid documents from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan after six years of stay in India. Locals are concerned as this bill seeks to grant citizenship to Chakma and Hajong refugees.
- **Who are they?** Chakmas and Hajongs were originally residents of Chittagong Hill Tracts in the erstwhile East Pakistan. They left their homeland when it was submerged by the Kaptai dam project in the 1960s.
- **The Chakmas, who are Buddhists,** and the Hajongs, who are Hindus, also allegedly faced religious persecution and entered India through the then Lushai Hills district of Assam (now Mizoram). The Centre moved the majority of them to the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), which is now Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Their numbers** have gone up from about 5,000 in 1964-69 to one lakh. At present, they don't have citizenship and land rights but are provided basic amenities by the state government.

Global Housing Technology Challenge

- **Key features of the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC) are:** GHTC aims to fast-track the construction of affordable housing and meet the target of constructing 1.2 crore houses by 2022. GHTC focuses on identifying and mainstreaming proven demonstrable technologies for lighthouse projects and spotting potential future technologies for incubation and acceleration support through ASHA (Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators) — India.
- **Objectives:** To enable adoption of construction techniques for housing that are affordable and takes minimum time as less as three months instead of the conventional three years for construction. Bring a paradigm shift in technology transition using large-scale construction under the PMAY-U as an opportunity to get the best available construction technologies across the globe.
- **About Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U):** The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Mission is being implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA).
- **The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Mission** seeks to address the housing requirement of urban poor including slum dwellers through following programme components:

- **In-situ Rehabilitation** of existing slum dwellers using land as a resource through private participation. Credit Linked Subsidy (Implemented as a Central Sector Scheme). Affordable Housing in Partnership. Subsidy for Beneficiary-led individual house construction/enhancement.
- **Why is it important?** Today, while developers in India's metropolitan cities are sitting on lakhs of unsold residences costing upwards of ₹ 50 lakh, the country is estimated to have a shortage of nearly 20 million housing units needed by the rural and urban poor, at far lower price points of ₹ 5-15 lakh.
- **The PMAY aims** to address this shortfall. With the increase in subsidised loan amount to ₹ 12 lakh, the scheme is expected to cover a higher proportion of the urban poor. The PMAY will hopefully incentivise India's construction and realty sector to reduce its traditional obsession with affluent home buyers in the cities.

Congenital Central Hypoventilation Syndrome (CCHS)

- **What is Congenital Central Hypoventilation Syndrome (CCHS)?** CCHS is a disorder of the nervous system in which the cue to breathe is lost when the patient goes to sleep. This results in a lack of oxygen and a build-up of carbon dioxide in the body, which can sometimes turn fatal. There are less than 1,000 known cases all over the world.
- **Though the name** describes the disorder as congenital, some forms of the disease may also be present in adults. In fact, adult onset is far more common than congenital presentation; there have been many adult cases reported in medical journals over the years.
- **The disease** is also known as Ondine's Curse. Ondine, a nymph in French mythology, had cursed her unfaithful husband that he would forget to breathe the moment he fell asleep.
- **Causes:** The mutation of a gene called PHOX2B, which is crucial for the maturation of nerve cells in the body, can cause CCHS. It can also be genetically acquired, which is when it is congenital. However, sudden mutation is more common than a transmission of the mutated gene from parent to child.
- **Treatment:** Treatment typically includes mechanical ventilation or use of a diaphragm pacemaker. People who have been diagnosed as newborns and adequately ventilated throughout childhood may reach the age of 20 to 30 years, and can live independently.

Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation or KALIA Scheme

- **Key features of Krushak Assistance** for Livelihood and Income Augmentation or KALIA Scheme:
- **Involves payments to encourage** cultivation and associated activities. Primary targets are small farmers, cultivators and landless agricultural labourers. All farmers will be provided Rs 10,000 per family as assistance for cultivation. Each family will get Rs 5,000 separately in the kharif and rabi seasons, for five cropping seasons between 2018-19 and 2021-22.
- **Targets 10 lakh landless households**, and specifically SC and ST families. They will be supported with a unit cost of Rs 12,500 for activities like goat rearing, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, poultry farming and fishery. A critical trade, dairy production, has deliberately been kept out because keeping a cow is more expensive, while milk production needs to have a collection route or agency that processes and refines this low shelf-life product.
- **It will assist the elderly**, sick and differently-abled population who are unable to take up cultivation, by providing Rs 10,000 per household per year. The scheme includes a life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh and additional personal accident coverage of the same amount for 57 lakh households. Crop loans up to Rs 50,000 are interest-free.
- **This is also going** to be an area-specific scheme in the sense that an input support for a particular trade, say mushroom cultivation, will be provided if it is prevalent throughout that locality so that there is aggregation of produce.
- **How different will KALIA be from a loan waiver?** Unlike a loan waiver, (through which) banks appease a few farmers, KALIA's main targets are rural activities as a whole. It will support farming on a small scale, sharecropping, fishing, animal herding, which are not covered under bank loans, but are caught in debt traps set up by local moneylenders. Also, a farm loan waiver will reduce credit available to farmers in the long term, while income support can be used to make a repayment or at least activate a bank account which can then receive a loan."

Half done: on the ban on plastic

- **India's efforts to beat plastic pollution:** So far, 22 States and Union Territories have joined the fight to beat the plastic pollution, announcing a ban on single-use plastics such as carry bags, cups, plates, cutlery, straws and thermocol products. Puducherry will implement a ban from March 1.
- **India has also won** global acclaim for its "Beat Plastic Pollution" resolve declared on World Environment Day last year, under which it pledged to eliminate single-use plastic by 2022.
- **All such efforts** have yielded positive results: Voluntary initiatives are having an impact in many States, as citizens reduce, reuse and sort their waste. A Bengaluru waste collective estimates that the volume of plastic waste that they collect dropped from about two tonnes a day to less than 100 kg.
- **Gaps existing:** Waste plastic from packaging of everything from food, cosmetics and groceries to goods delivered by online platforms remains unaddressed.
- **Collect-back system:** The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 are clear that producers, importers and brand owners must adopt a collect-back system for the plastic they introduce into the environment. However, not much has been done to take the process forward.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility clause:** Small producers of plastics are facing the ban, while more organised entities covered by the Extended Producer Responsibility clause continue with business as usual.
- **What is needed?** Governments must start charging the producers for their waste, and collect it diligently, which will lead to recovery and recycling. State and local governments should upgrade their waste management systems, which is necessary to even measure the true scale of packaging waste.
- **Role of local bodies:** Local bodies should consult manufacturers or importers to assess the problem. Cities and towns need competent municipal systems to achieve this.
- **Background- The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 aim to:** Increase minimum thickness of plastic carry bags from 40 to 50 microns and stipulate minimum thickness of 50 micron for plastic sheets also to facilitate collection and recycle of plastic waste,
- **Expand the jurisdiction of applicability from the municipal area to rural areas, because plastic has reached rural areas also:** To bring in the responsibilities of producers and generators, to introduce collect back system of plastic waste by the producers/brand owners; To introduce collection of plastic waste management fee; To promote use of plastic waste for road construction for gainful utilization of waste and also address the waste disposal issue;
- **Conclusion:** The indiscriminate disposal of plastic has become a major threat to the environment. An eco-friendly product, which is a complete substitute of the plastic in all uses, has not been found till date. In the absence of a suitable alternative, it is impractical and undesirable to impose a blanket ban on the use of plastic all over the country. The real challenge is to improve plastic waste management systems.

NMCG Officials and Partners Come Together to Contribute to Clean Ganga Fund

- **The officials** and partners of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) came together on one platform, to make personal donations to the Clean Ganga Fund on a voluntary basis.
- **About Clean Ganga Fund** – "Clean Ganga Fund (CGF)" is set up with voluntary contributions from residents of the country and Non-Resident Indian (NRIs) / Person of Indian Origin (PIO) and others. The Fund will have the objective of contributing to the national effort of cleaning of the river Ganga.
- **Domestic donors** to the Fund shall be eligible for tax benefits as applicable in the case of the Swachh Bharat Kosh. The Fund would be managed by a Trust to be headed by Finance Minister. The secretariat of the Trust will be set up in Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation under the Mission Director, Clean Ganga.
- **Features of CGF:** CGF will explore the possibility of setting up daughter funds in other jurisdictions/countries of high donor interest such as USA, UK, Singapore, UAE, etc. to enable tax benefits to donors in their respective jurisdictions.
- **CGF will identify** and fund specific projects which could be pilot projects, R&D projects, innovative projects or other focused projects. CGF will be subject to such audit as required by law as well as audit by any agency determined by Government.
- **The following broad activities will be financed from the Fund:** a) Activities outlined under the 'Namami Gange' programme for cleaning of river Ganga. b) Control of non-point pollution from agricultural runoff, human defecation, cattle wallowing, etc. c) Setting up of waste treatment and disposal plants along the river around the cities. d) Conservation of the biotic diversity of the river. e) Community based activities to reduce polluting human interface with the river. f)

Development of public amenities including activities such as Ghat redevelopment. g) Research and Development projects and innovative projects for new technology and processes for cleaning the river. h) Independent oversight through intensive monitoring and real time reporting. i) Any other activity as approved by the Trust.

- **Background: National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** – It was registered as a society on 12th August 2011 under the Societies Registration Act 1860. It acted as implementation arm of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA), constituted under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986. NGRBA has since been dissolved with effect from the 7th October 2016, consequent to constitution of National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred as National Ganga Council).
- **The Act envisages** five-tier structure at national, state and district level to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water so as to rejuvenate the river Ganga as below: National Ganga Council under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.
- **Empowered Task Force (ETF)** on river Ganga under chairmanship of Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG). State Ganga Committees, and District Ganga Committees in every specified district abutting river Ganga and its tributaries in the states.

IMBEX 2018-19:

- **What is it?** It is India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise. IMBEX 2018-19, is being held in Haryana. It is the second edition of the IMBEX.
- **Main Objective of IMBEX 2018-19:** Train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations under the UN flag.
- **'Roadeo': What is it?** The traffic police authorities of Pune are planning to introduce a robot named 'Roadeo' which would move around city roads, functioning as a quasi-traffic policeman and cautioning commuters about traffic rules and offences.
- **It is a first** of its kind initiative in the entire country. If this pilot project turns out to be successful it would go a long way in easing the traffic management burden and reducing the workload of overburdened policemen.

Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project:

- **Context:** The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has given its approval for the Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project of Telangana.
- **About the Project:** The Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project aims to divert Godavari river water to irrigate 2.72 lakh hectares in three districts of Telangana.



Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurates UNNATI-- Unispace Nanosatellite Assembly & Training programme of ISRO in Bengaluru

- **UNNATI**, a capacity building programme on Nanosatellite development, is an initiative by ISRO to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space (UNISPACE-50). The programme provides opportunities to the participating developing countries to strengthen in assembling, integrating and testing of Nanosatellite. UNNATI programme is planned to be conducted for 3 years by U.R. Rao Satellite Centre of ISRO in 3 batches and will target to benefit officials of 45 countries. The first batch started today in which 30 delegates from 17 countries are participating.
- **Shehri Samridhi Utsav** focusing on Urban Livelihoods from 1st - 15th February 2019
- **Aims at extending** outreach of DAY-NULM to poorest of the poor & most vulnerable - to showcase its initiatives & facilitate access of SHG Members : Hardeep Puri
- **Shehri Sahabhagita Manch** proposed for regular meetings of ULB officials with SHG federations
- **Job Melas to be** organized by states in all cities having more than 5 Lakh population

National exhibition cum sale of SHG products in Delhi from 8th – 17th Feb 2019 along with National Street Food Festival from 14th Feb

- **Shri Hardeep S. Puri**, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs, has informed that a fortnight of events named 'Shehri Samridhi Utsav', focusing on urban livelihoods is being organised by his Ministry, from 1st -15th February 2019. The event aims at extending the outreach of National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable, showcase its initiatives and facilitate access of SHG members to the other government schemes. Shri Puri was addressing members of the media here today. Shri Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, MoHUA and Shri Sanjay Kumar, Mission Director DAY-NULM were also present at the Conference.
- **Shri Puri** informed the gathering that Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana DAY-NULM addresses multiple dimensions of urban poverty by developing strong community-based organizations, providing placement oriented skill training, providing subsidized loans for self-employment ventures, supporting street vendors' livelihoods and establishing shelter for the homeless. Elaborating further, Shri Puri said the Mission has made significant progress on all these fronts –
- **Over 34 lakh urban** poor women have been organized into Self Help Groups and their federations. Over 8.9 lakh candidates have been skill trained and certified with over 4.6 lakh provided placement, Over 8.5 lakh individuals and groups have been supported to access subsidized loans. 1,098 shelters have been made functional creating capacity for more than 60,000 urban homeless. 16 lakh street vendors have been identified through survey in 2,430 cities and half of them have been given identity cards. Addressing the media, Shri Durga Shanker Mishra informed that various activities will be organized at the city, state and national level, with the active participation from the States and Cities. The city level activities planned during the event will include the following -
- **A survey named 'Safety Net Survey'** is being conducted to identify eligible SHG members not covered by government programs viz. SBM(U), PMAY(U), Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana and National Nutrition Mission. The necessary formalities will be completed by 31st January 2019 and the sanction letters/benefits are planned to be distributed during the pakhwada.
- **SHG members across cities** will participate in a rally to spread awareness about DAY-NULM. Revolving Funds will be provided to all eligible SHGs. A drive to form new SHGs, especially for vulnerable sections such as informal sanitation workers, manual scavengers, and waste pickers, will be taken up. A new platform called Shehri Sahabhagita Manch has been proposed for regular meetings of ULB officials with SHG federations. This would increase participation of these collectives of the urban poor in resolution of local issues and create a mechanism for ULBs to identify gaps in provision of basic services in urban poor settlements.

- **Loan camps would be organized** by banks close to the urban poor colonies, to facilitate access to credit for micro-enterprises of the urban poor. Further, all pending loan applications are proposed to be disposed by 31st January 2019. Shelters for the urban homeless under DAY-NULM would be adopted by colleges located nearby. This would create a healthy interactive environment for shelter residents and a good learning experience for college students.
- **The State Level Activities will include** - Job Melas will be organized by the State in all the cities having more than 5,00,000 population. It would cover recruitment for wage employment as well as apprenticeship programs. Melas for exhibition and sale of SHG products would also be organized at the State Capitals and major cities. Identity Cards will be provided to all eligible street vendors. Street food festivals to celebrate the local street food culture and cuisine would be organized at the State Capitals to support the street food vendors. Training of street food vendors by FSSAI with a focus on health and hygiene is also proposed to be conducted. Similarly, the National Level Events will have the following components -
- **DAY-NULM Swachhata Excellence Awards** have been instituted to recognize the ALFs, CLFs and ULBs working towards achieving sanitation outcomes in their communities and promoting dignified livelihoods in the sanitation sector. During Shehri Samridhi Utsav, a National Workshop will be organized on sanitation-based livelihoods with active participation from the States, ULBs, and federations of SHGs from across the country, wherein the Swachhata Excellence Awards would be distributed. A National Conference on Street Vending will also be held to discuss issues and seek a way forward to support livelihoods of street vendors. National Exhibition cum sale of SHG products is being organized in New Delhi from 8th – 17th Feb 2019 along with a National Street Food Festival which will start on 14th Feb. These events will give a prominent platform and exposure to women microentrepreneurs and food vendors from all over the country.

Kumbh Mela 2019

- **About Kumbh Mela:** The Kumbh Mela (the festival of the sacred pitcher) is anchored in Hindu mythology. It is the largest public gathering and collective act of faith, anywhere in the world.
- **Crowds gather** at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mystical Sarasvati. Primarily, this congregation includes Ascetics, Saints, Sadhus, Sadhis, Kalpvasis, and Pilgrims from all walks of life. The Mela was included in the list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO in 2017.
- **Celebration:** Kumbh Mela is celebrated four times over a course of 12 years.
- **The geographical location of Kumbh Mela spans over four locations in India and the Mela site keeps rotating between one of the four pilgrimage places on four sacred rivers as listed below:** Haridwar on the Ganges in Uttarakhand. Ujjain on the Shipra in Madhya Pradesh. Nashik on the Godavari in Maharashtra. Prayagraj at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Selection of site:** Each site's celebration is based on a distinct set of astrological positions of the Sun, the Moon, and the Jupiter. The celebrations occur at the exact moment when these positions are fully occupied, as it is considered to be the holiest time in Hinduism.

World Dynamic City 2019

- **What is JLL's City Momentum Index?** It measures momentum for 131 of the world's most commercially active cities. This is done by tracking a range of socio-economic and commercial real estate indicators over a three-year period to identify the urban economies and real estate markets undergoing the most rapid expansion. Silicon Valley of India, Bengaluru has emerged as the world's most dynamic city.
- **Analysis:** The absence of European and American cities demonstrates a marked East-West growth divide, reflecting Asia's continued rapid urbanization and economic growth, driven by globalization, innovation and demographic factors.
- **Overall,** Indian and Chinese cities dominate the rankings, accounting for three quarters of the top 20. Key drivers of growth: Asia continues to show strong momentum, in terms of attracting capital, companies and people. Tech sector is a key driver of both real estate and economic momentum—driven by large technology firms as well as dynamic start-ups.
- **Challenges:** Investing in infrastructure and greater transparency is essential. The cities need to address the environmental and social impacts of rapid growth such as social inequality, congestion and environmental degradation.

Supreme Court gets two new judges

- **What is the collegium system of appointment of judges?** The collegium system was commissioned by two judgments of the Supreme Court in 1990s. It has no mention in the original Constitution of India or its successive amendments.
- **In the Third Judges case (1998)**, the Supreme Court opined that the chief justice of India should consult a collegium of four senior most judges of the Supreme Court and even if two judges give an adverse opinion, he should not send the recommendation to the government.
- **Eligibility to become a Supreme Court judge:** To become a judge of the Supreme court, an individual should be an Indian citizen. The norms relating to the eligibility has been envisaged in the Article 124 of the Indian Constitution. In terms of age, a person should not exceed 65 years of age. The person should serve as a judge of one high court or more (continuously), for at least five years or the person should be an advocate in the High court for at least 10 years or a distinguished jurist.
- **Is the collegium's recommendation final and binding?** The collegium sends its final recommendation to the President of India for approval. The President can either accept it or reject it. In the case it is rejected, the recommendation comes back to the collegium. If the collegium reiterates its recommendation to the President, then he/she is bound by that recommendation.
- **NJAC and other efforts to reform:** The collegium system has come under a fair amount of criticism. In 2015, the parliament passed a law to replace the collegium with a National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC). This was struck down as unconstitutional by the supreme court, in the Fourth Judges' Case, as the new system would undermine the independence of the judiciary.
- **Putting the old system** of the collegium back, the court invited suggestions, even from the general public, on how to improve the collegium system, broadly along the lines of – setting up an eligibility criteria for appointments, a permanent secretariat to help the collegium sift through material on potential candidates, infusing more transparency into the selection process, grievance redressal and any other suggestion not in these four categories, like transfer of judges. This resulted in the court asking the government and the collegium to finalize the memorandum of procedure incorporating the above.
- **Need for reforms:** Collegium system has its concerns as absolute power is not desirable in any branch of the State. Diversity in consideration such as geography, gender and ethnicity should all “legitimately weigh in the balance” when appointing judges from a pool of potentially meritorious candidates. The Collegium system is unable to cater to this need of diversity in the judicial system. It is seen as a closed-door affair without a formal and transparent system. Judges, hopeful of going higher, have to please the members of the collegium. This system overlooks several talented junior judges and advocates. Sometimes, collegium gets obstructed, when old rivalries between its members see each other's favourites getting vetoed. Sometimes collegium meetings become examples of bargaining within the collective, and consensus emerging from a division of the spoils.
- **Reforms needed:** The need of the hour is to revisit the existing system through a transparent and participatory procedure, preferably by an independent broad-based constitutional body guaranteeing judicial primacy but not judicial exclusivity.
- **The new system** should ensure independence, reflect diversity, demonstrate professional competence and integrity. The system needs to establish a body which is independent and objective in the selection process.
- **Setting up a constitutional body** accommodating the federal concept of diversity and independence of judiciary for appointment of judges to the higher judiciary can also be thought of as an alternate measure.
- **As of now, instead** of selecting the number of judges required against a certain number of vacancies, the collegium must provide a panel of possible names to the President to appointment in order of preference and other valid criteria.

SC Dismisses pleas on Appointment of DGPs

- **Supreme Court** held that the directions of the court on selection and appointment of DGPs were issued in larger public interest and to protect the police officials from political interference.
- **Directions issued by the Supreme Court in appointing DGPs:** States and Union Territories shall send names of senior police officers to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) for being considered as probable candidates for the post of DGPs or police commissioners.
- **The UPSC would** then prepare a list of three most suitable candidates out of the list of names sent by states and Union Territories. The states are free to appoint any one of them as the police chief.
- **It is mandatory** for the states to send the list of senior police officers to the UPSC at least three months prior to the retirement of the incumbent. The UPSC would then form a committee and intimate the state concerned, which in turn will immediately appoint one of the persons from among that list.

National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023)

- **The components** of the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023) are: Aim: employ a multi-pronged strategy involving education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families to address the issue.
- **Focus on preventive** education, awareness generation, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent people, besides training and capacity-building of service providers through the collaborative efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs.
- **Involvement of stakeholders:** Coordination with implementing agencies for controlling the sale of sedatives, painkillers and muscle relaxant drugs, holding awareness generation programmes and checking online sale of drugs by stringent monitoring by the cyber cell are proposed under the Action Plan. Awareness generation through social, print, digital and online media, and engagement of celebrities, besides strengthening the national toll-free helpline for drug prevention. The Action Plan calls for persuading principals, directors, vice chancellors of educational institutions to ensure that no drugs are sold within/nearby the campus.
- **Increase community** participation and public cooperation in the reduction of demand by involving Panchayati Raj institutions, Urban Local Bodies, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and other local groups like Mahila Mandals, self-help groups etc to tackle the menace of drugs. A steering committee would be constituted under the chairmanship of the secretary, Social Justice Ministry, and with representatives from several other Ministries to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.
- **Drug menace:** India is vulnerable to narcotic drug trafficking as it is located between two largest Opium producing regions of the world i.e. Golden Crescent in the west and Golden Triangle in the east. Drug trafficking and abuse also pose serious threat to our societies. Estimates suggest that there are 40 lakh drug addicts in the country. The most common drugs of abuse are 'ganja', 'hashish', 'opium' and 'heroin'. The abuse of pharmaceutical preparations like 'buprenorphine', codeine based cough syrups and painkillers like 'proxivon' has also assumed serious proportions. In certain regions of the country, drug abuse has already become a severe social-economic problem affecting the vulnerable age groups.
- **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 AIIMS.

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019

- **Significance:** The legislation is significant as it brings accountability in the elementary education system. The proposal received the support of a majority of state governments.
- **RTE amendment Bill- Key features:** The Bill seeks to amend the Right to Education (RTE) Act to abolish the "no-detention" policy in schools. Under the current provisions of the Act, no student can be detained up to class VIII. As per the amendment, it would be left to the states to decide whether to continue the no-detention policy. The bill provides for regular examination in classes V and VIII, and if a child fails, the amendment bill grants a provision to give her or him additional opportunity to take a re-examination within two months. Such children will be provided with two-month remedial teaching to perform better in the re-examinations. If the students still do not pass the exam, the state government may decide to detain them.
- **Right to Education (RTE) Act:** The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (the Act) provides for free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years.
- **What is no detention policy?** According to this provision "no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class". This translates into automatic promotions to the next class every year until Class VII. Instead of exams, schools are supposed to hold Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluations (CCE) for every child.
- **Need for removal of this clause:** The provision had attracted criticism with several states and schools complaining that it compromised on academic rigour and learning levels and quality at schools.

- **The TSR Subramanian committee** for formulation of the National Policy on Education has also suggested that 'no detention' policy should be discontinued after Class V. It had recommended restoration of detention provision, remedial coaching and two extra chances to each student such to move to a higher class. A sub-committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education also studied the issue closely and recommended a provisional detention clause at Classes V and VIII. In 2013, a parliamentary panel had also asked the ministry to 'rethink' on its "policy of automatic promotion up to Class VIII".

Kyasanur Forest Disease

- **About the Disease:** KFD is caused by the Kyasanur Forest Disease Virus (KFDV). The virus was identified in 1957 when it was isolated from a sick monkey from the Kyasanur Forest. Since then, between 400-500 human cases per year have been reported.
- **Hard ticks** (*Hemaphysalis spinigera*) are the reservoir of the KFD virus and once infected, remain so for life.
- **Rodents**, shrews, and monkeys are common hosts for KFDV after being bitten by an infected tick. KFDV can cause epizootics with high fatality in primates.
- **Transmission:** Transmission to humans may occur after a tick bite or contact with an infected animal, most importantly a sick or recently dead monkey. No person-to-person transmission has been described. The disease as of now is stated to be transmitted through monkeys. Large animals such as goats, cows, and sheep may become infected with KFD but play a limited role in the transmission of the disease. These animals provide the blood meals for ticks and it is possible for infected animals with viremia to infect other ticks, but transmission of KFDV to humans from these larger animals is extremely rare. Furthermore, there is no evidence of disease transmission via the unpasteurised milk of any of these animals.
- **Symptoms:** After an incubation period of 3-8 days, the symptoms of KFD begin suddenly with chills, fever, and headache. Severe muscle pain with vomiting, gastrointestinal symptoms and bleeding problems may occur 3-4 days after initial symptom onset. Patients may experience abnormally low blood pressure, and low platelet, red blood cell, and white blood cell counts.
- **After 1-2 weeks** of symptoms, some patients recover without complication. However, the illness is biphasic for a subset of patients (10-20 %) who experience a second wave of symptoms at the beginning of the third week. These symptoms include fever and signs of neurological manifestations, such as severe headache, mental disturbances, tremors, and vision deficits.
- **Vulnerable Group:** People with recreational or occupational exposure to rural or outdoor settings (e.g., hunters, herders, forest workers, farmers) are potentially at risk for infection by contact with infected ticks. Seasonality is another important risk factor as more cases are reported during the dry season, from November through June.
- **Diagnosis:** Diagnosis can be made in the early stage of illness by molecular detection by PCR or virus isolation from blood. Later, serologic testing using enzyme-linked immunosorbent serologic assay (ELISA) can be performed.
- **Prevention:** Doctors say there is no specific treatment for KFD, but early hospitalisation and supportive therapy is important. Supportive therapy includes the maintenance of hydration and the usual precautions for patients with bleeding disorders. A vaccine does exist for KFD and is used in endemic areas of India. Additional preventative measures include insect repellents and wearing protective clothing in areas where ticks are endemic. Sources: the hindu.

Saksham 2019

- **Saksham** (Sanrakshan Kshamta Mahotsav) is an annual flagship event of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India.
- **Saksham actively** involves the Oil & Gas PSUs along with other stakeholders like State Governments,
- **To create** focused attention on fuel conservation through people centric activities and To sensitize the masses about the conservation and efficient use of petroleum products leading to better health and environment.
- **About PCRA (established in 1978)**– Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) is a registered society set up under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India. As a non-profit organization, PCRA is a national government agency engaged in promoting energy efficiency in various sectors of economy. PCRA aims at making oil conservation a national movement. As part of its mandate, PCRA is entrusted with the task of creating awareness amongst the masses about the importance, methods and benefits of conserving petroleum products & emission reduction. It sponsors R&D activities for the development of fuel-efficient equipment / devices and organizes multi-media campaigns for creating mass awareness for the conservation of petroleum products.

- **To take the** message to the people, PCRA uses all possible and effective media for mass communication. To give impetus to the oil conservation movement, PCRA utilizes various platforms like the World environment day, World energy day, various festivals etc. It functions as a Think Tank to the Govt. of India for proposing policies and strategies on petroleum conservation and environment protection aimed at reducing excessive dependence on oil.
- **For the benefit** of various target groups of petroleum products, PCRA has developed literature containing simple ready to implement conservation tips and techniques. Special low cost green leaflets have also been developed to educate the masses on the ill effects of pollution caused due to incomplete combustion and its impact on health.

Sangeet Natak Akademi launches second phase of the Web Campaign 'SANJHI – MUJH MEIN KALAKAR'.

- **Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA)** the National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama will launch the second phase of the Web Campaign 'SANJHI-MUJH MEIN KALAKAR'. It is an initiative to document and promote the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and diverse cultural traditions of the country by direct public-participation. The literal meaning of the term SANJHI is "to share" and "to partner".
- **The Second Phase:** The second phase of this campaign has its main focus area like the folk, traditional, customary, socially events and ritualistic art forms – woven as a cultural fabric around the harvest festival season of January. It is widely celebrated as various nomenclatures like Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Lohri, Bhogali Bihu, Torgya, Uttarayan, Attukkal Pongal, etc.
- **The Intention:** It intends to bring forth such forms that are aligned with the domains of intangible cultural heritage as per the Convention of Safeguarding the ICH under UNESCO: Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; Performing arts; Social practices, rituals and festival events; Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; Traditional craftsmanship.
- **About The Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) –** Founded in 31st May 1952 [HQ: New Delhi]
- **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 is presently an Autonomous Body of the Ministry of Culture, and is fully funded by the Government for implementation of its schemes and programmes. It is the nodal agency of the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India to coordinate the matters related to Intangible Cultural Heritage and various UNESCO Conventions addressing Cultural Diversity and promotion and dissemination of multifarious cultural traditions and expressions of the country.
- **What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?** The term 'cultural heritage' has changed content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO. Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

EXIM bank:

- **Context:** Cabinet approves ₹6,000 crore capital infusion in Exim Bank and an increase in the Exim Bank authorised capital from ₹10,000 crore to ₹20,000 crore. About EXIM bank: Export-Import Bank of India was established in 1982 under the Export-Import Bank of India Act 1981.
- **Functions:** It provides direct financial assistance to exporters of plant, machinery and related service in the form of medium-term credit. Underwriting the issue of shares, stocks, bonds, debentures of any company engaged in exports. It provides rediscount of export bills for a period not exceeding 90 days against short-term usance export bills discounted by commercial banks. The bank gives overseas buyers credit to foreign importers for import of Indian capital goods and related services. Developing and financing export oriented industries.
- **First human rights TV channel Launched:** Context: The world's first television channel dedicated to human rights has been launched in London by the International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR).
- **Key facts:** It would be a web-based channel and would deliver human rights issues to audiences in over 20 countries across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. The Human Rights Channel aims to deliver hidden stories ignored by mainstream media into people's living rooms.

Gandhi Peace Prize announced for years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018:

- **Context:** The Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 has been announced by the Union Ministry of Culture. The awardees were selected by the jury under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 2018 Gandhi Peace Prize was conferred on Yohei Sasakawa.
- **About the Gandhi Peace Prize:** The Gandhi Peace Prize was instituted in the year 1995 on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. This annual award is given to individuals and institutions for their contributions towards social, economic and political transformation through non-violence and other Gandhian methods.
- **The award** carries a cash prize of Rs 1 crore, a citation and a Plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item. The Award for every year is selected by a Jury under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister.

Global Aviation Summit 2019:

- **Context:** Global Aviation Summit 2019 is being held in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The theme of the Global Aviation Summit 2019 is 'Flying for all-especially the next 6 Billion'.
- **The summit** is being organised by the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation, Airport Authority of India (AAI) in association with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
- **The objective of the Summit** is to provide a platform to the aviation industry to discuss the challenges faced in the newly developing growth spots and understand how technology-driven innovations will change air travel in the future.



Know Your Budget series

- **It is a fortnight** series started by the union Finance Ministry on Twitter which explains the importance of Union Budget and its making. It aims to educate the general public about the budgetary process.
- **The government** on February 1 would unveil the interim Budget for 2019-20 as the general elections are due in the next couple of months. The final Budget for the next fiscal would be presented by the new government. The first series of tweets explained what is Union Budget and Vote on Account.
- **What is Budget?** Budget is the most comprehensive report of the government's finances in which revenues from all sources and outlays for all activities are consolidated. The Budget also contains estimates of the government's accounts for the next fiscal year called Budget estimates.

UNNATI Programme

- **UNNATI Programme:** The UNNATI Programme is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE+50).
- **UNNATI programme** is planned to be conducted by U R Rao Satellite Centre (URSC) of ISRO for 3 years in 3 batches and will target to benefit 90 officials from 45 countries.
- **The primary objectives of the programme are:** To offer a simplified and increased exposure to satellite fabrication technologies, as part of the UNISPACE initiative. To provide theoretical course on satellite technology. To provide hands-on training to assemble, integrate and test a low cost, modular nano satellite.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018

- **The survey** shows the prevalence of learning deficit and the poverty of basic reading and arithmetic skills among students in Indian schools.
- **Highlights of the report:** Indian students, especially those in elementary school (Classes I-VIII), are not learning enough. To cite a metric, only half (50.3%) of all students in Class V can read texts meant for Class II students.
- **There seems** to have been some improvement in learning levels, especially among students of Class III and Class V, in 2018 compared with those of the previous five years. However, the improvement is not visible at a higher level, for example among students of Class VIII.
- **The deficit** is across government and private schools. Traditionally, students in private schools have fared better than their government school counterparts, but that's a relative situation. For example, while 40% of Class VIII students in government schools can do simple division, the figure is 54.2% in private schools.
- **However, there** is gradual improvement in some segments and in some states. The reading ability among Class V students in Kerala jumped 10 percentage points in 2018 from that in 2016. In Himachal Pradesh, the growth is nearly 8 percentage points and in Chhattisgarh and Odisha it is around 7 percentage points between 2016 and 2018.

- **While 30.9%** of students in the 6-14 age group were in private schools in 2018, the figure was 30.6% in 2016 and 30.8% in 2014. This is less than a percentage point growth since 2014. Concerns over the poor quality of education and its effects on the workforce of the country:
- **This poor learning outcome** in India is despite the Right to Education (RTE) Act having been in force since April 2010 making eight years of education compulsory for children and the Centre floating schemes such as "Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat", apart from states' efforts.
- **Access to elementary** (classes I-VIII) schooling is almost universal and the number of children out of schools is below 4%, but a quality deficit, that too for more than a decade, raises questions about the priorities of governments at the central and state levels.
- **Last year, the World Bank** said Indians born today are likely to be just 44% productive as workers, way below their Asian peers.
- **Why be concerned about quality of education?** India's demographic dividend depends on the learning level of students. The quality of education has a direct bearing on any economy. With some 240 million students or nearly 20% of the Indian population in school, their quality of learning or lack of it assumes significance for the competitiveness of the country. It has an impact on the quality of life, efficiency at the workplace, and labour productivity issues.
- **Way ahead:** It is a long time to have only awareness, and a quantum jump in the education sector is the need of the hour. As the problem has now been diagnosed and public advocacy has got the momentum, the governments and civil society need to focus on three aspects—a bigger spending on education, maybe 6% of GDP instead of the present 2.7%, political willingness to improve education, and a drastic change in the quality of teacher education.

Global Risks Report

- **Global Risks Report and its significance:** Based on the work of the Global Risk Network, the report describes changes occurring in the global risks landscape from year to year and identifies global catastrophic risks.
- **The report** explores the interconnectedness of risks, and is intended to raise awareness about the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to the mitigation of global risk.
- **Top 10 risks by likelihood as per the latest report:** Extreme weather events. Failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Major natural disasters. Massive incident of data fraud/theft. Large scale cyberattacks. Man-made environmental damage and disasters. Large-scale involuntary migration. Major biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse. Water crises. Asset bubbles in a major economy.
- **Analysis of the report and key takeaways:** Environmental risks dominate the global risks landscape in terms of impact and likelihood for the third year in a row. This includes extreme weather events and failure of climate mitigation and adaptation. Only 12 years left to stay beneath 1.5C. However, there is a lack of political will to set more stretching targets to cut emissions. The report finds that business leaders are more concerned about climate in the long term. This disconnect will need to be tackled.
- **Global risks** are intensifying, but our capacity to respond to them is declining. Power is moving towards more nationalist, authoritarian states and they are becoming more inwards-looking. With greater geopolitical friction, our ability to cooperate to solve challenges such as cyber risks and climate change has become more challenging.
- **Geopolitics** and geo-economic factors, such as uncertainty and nationalism are fuelling risks. Innovation is also outpacing our ability to manage it and there are growing concerns around technology misuse.
- **Shorter-term** fears are around geopolitical and cyber threats. For top business leaders, cyber risk concern is rising globally and is the highest ranked threat. Other concerns also exist including fiscal crises, unemployment, energy price shocks, national governance failure, interstate conflict and natural disasters.
- **There is a significant** financing gap (US\$18 trillion) in infrastructure capital – with only US\$79 trillion currently planned between now and 2040. This means 20% more financing is needed than we are putting in today. Furthermore, infrastructure needs to be resilient to extreme weather events. Business, with its reliance on public sector infrastructure, will be impacted and need to work with government on solutions.

Angel Tax

- **Major Changes introduced:** As per the changes, all DIPP-recognised start-ups can apply to the department for approvals requesting exemption from Angel Tax, or Section 56 2 (viiB) of the Income Tax Act, which will then be sent to the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) for approval.

- **The changes** are applicable to start-ups, recognised by DIPP, where the amount of paid-up share capital, and share premium of the capital after the proposed issue of share does not exceed Rs. 10 crore.
- **The notification** specifies a list of documents that start-ups will have to submit to the DIPP while seeking approval. The CBDT is mandated to either approve or reject the applications within 45 days.
- **WHAT IS THE LATEST ISSUE?** At least 80 startups have received notices to pay angel tax since last year. Many founders have said they have been asked to pay up as much as 30% of their funding as tax. Angels have also received multiple notices asking them to furnish details on their source of income, their bank account statements and other financial data.
- **Way ahead:** The changes proposed do not ensure that start-ups will no longer receive notices on angel tax from the tax department. The start-up community views this as a step in the right direction, but insists that the issues facing founders and investors due to angel tax remain unaddressed through the notification.

Agri-Vision 2019

- **Agriculture sector** accounts for 18 per cent of India's GDP and provides employment to 50 per cent of the workforce of the country. The Gross Value Added by agriculture, forestry and fishing is estimated at Rs 17.67 trillion (US\$ 274.23 billion) in FY18.
- **During 2017-18 crop year**, food grain production is estimated at record 284.83 million tonnes.
- **The introduction of high yielding varieties**, irrigation facilities, increased input flow through fertilizers and pesticides, farm mechanization, credit facilities, price support, and other rural infrastructure facilities ushered the green revolution over the past few decades. Growth of Agricultural sector is important for inclusive growth and poverty alleviation.
- **Need for concerted efforts** from all stake holders to find long term solution to various challenges faced by Agricultural sector, Loan waiver is only a temporary relief but proves futile in long run in addressing Farmers concerns
- **India today is not only** self-sufficient in respect of demand for food, but is also a net exporter of agri-products occupying seventh position globally. It is one of the top producers of cereals (wheat & rice), pulses, fruits, vegetables, milk, meat and marine fish. However, we are still facing deficit of pulses and oilseeds. Although, the availability of fruits, vegetables, milk, meat and fish has increased, the most important aspect is to ensure access and affordability to a vast majority of Indians, including farmers.
- **Food processing industry** Plays a critical role in improving agrarian economy, raising farm incomes, reducing wastages, ensuring value addition, promoting crop diversification and generating employment opportunities as well as export earnings. Vital link between agriculture and industry. The Indian food and grocery market is the world's sixth largest. The Indian food processing industry accounts for 32 per cent of the country's total food market, one of the largest industries in India.
- **Organic Farming** India holds a unique position among 172 countries practicing organic agriculture. India is home to 30 per cent of the total organic producers in the world, but accounts for just 2.59 per cent (1.5 million hectares) of the total organic cultivation area of 57.8 million hectares.
- **Horticulture** leading horticultural country of the world with a total annual fruits and vegetable production of 306.82 million tonnes during 2017-18 India is the second largest fruit producer in the world.
- **Livestock** Has been growing faster than crop sector. The contribution of livestock output to the total output of the agriculture sector has significantly increased from 15 per cent in 1981-82 to 29 per cent in 2015-16 acts as cushion and engine for agricultural growth.
- **Dairy industry** India is also the world's second largest milk producer and is emerging as a major exporter now. It is contributing around 26 per cent to total agriculture GDP.
- **Challenges** Climate change, fragmented land holding, increase in demand for food, stagnating farm incomes, declining productivity, diminishing and declining natural resources etc. Lack of favourable terms of trade, vagaries of monsoon, technology not reaching farmers in time, absence of proper marketing strategies etc. 85 per cent farmers are small and marginal with land holding of less than 2 hectares.
- **Linking these small farmers with market is another major challenge in our system.** To enhance the farmers' income, it is necessary to link them with marketers, traders and exporters. Challenges for food security in the 21st century is not only improving productivity but also yield stability through the development of crops which are disease-resistant, pest-resistant and adaptable to climate change.
- **Solution to address the challenges** Some ways to address the issues – accord top priority to farmer-oriented marketing, providing adequate cold storage facilities and refrigerator vans, focusing on food processing through value addition, extending timely and affordable credit to farmers and ensuring that innovations and technologies reach the farmers, researchers and farm experts to come out with solutions to the multi-dimensional problems faced by the farming sector.

- **United efforts by governments**, scientific community, Krishi Vigyana Kendras and farmers to realize the ambitious goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022. Students pursuing agri courses must spend at least six months with farmers to have a first-hand understanding of the problems faced by the latter. Adopt the latest technologies from seeds to post harvest management to marketing and to improve productivity on par with the other leading nations.
- **The use of Information Technology**, Space Technology, Geo-Informatics, Internet of Things (IoT), Block Chain Technology, Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Analytics and their first-mile connectivity to farmers is vital for enhancing farm incomes. Digital technologies can also help in countering vagaries in farming and optimising the resources.
- **Government initiatives** Improve soil fertility on a sustainable basis through the soil health card scheme.
- **Provide improved** access to irrigation and enhanced water efficiency through Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY). Support organic farming through Paramparagat KrishiVikasYojana (PKVY). Creation of a unified national agriculture market to boost the income of farmers.
- **To mitigate risk** in agriculture sector, "Pradhan Mantri Fasal BimaYojana (PMFBY) has been launched for implementation from Kharif 2016.
- **Focusing on irrigation** with schemes like "Per Drop More Crop", provision of quality seeds and nutrients based on soil health, setting up warehouses and cold chains to prevent post-harvest crop losses, promoting value addition through food processing, creating a National Farm Market, removing distortions and e-platform across 585 Stations.
- **To achieve the target** of doubling farmer income by 2022 increasing investments in agricultural R&D and rolling out efficient institutional reforms are vital to tackle the emerging challenges in agriculture, including food and nutrition security both at national and regional levels.

Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC):

- **About SFAC:** The Government established Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) as a Society in January 1994 to facilitate agri-business ventures by catalysing private investment through Venture Capital Assistance (VCA) Scheme in close association with financial institutions. The role of State SFACs is to aggressively promote agribusiness project development in their respective States.
- **Management:** The Society is governed by Board of Management which is chaired, ex-officio, by Hon'ble Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare as the President and the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, is the ex-officio Vice-President.
- **The main functions of SFAC are:** Promotion of development of small agribusiness through VCA scheme. Helping formation and growth of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) / Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs).
- **Improving availability** of working capital and development of business activities of FPOs/FPCs through Equity Grant and Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme. Implementation of National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Electronic Trading platform.

Opinion | Why India's sedition law needs to be buried?

- **Charges of sedition- recent concerns:** There have been many incidents in recent times where "misguided" people have been termed "anti-national".
- **Law enforcement** agencies forget the fact that the sentiment could have been demonstrated through a slogan, a cheer, a statement, protest against a nuclear power project, or an innocuous post on social media. In all these cases, the state, across regimes, has filed charges of sedition.
- **Authorities often** forget the fact that sedition can't be applied to instances of criticism of the government or a political functionary. More importantly, words alone are not enough for such a charge to be slapped. Incitement to violence is the most crucial ingredient of the offence of sedition.
- **Going through the numbers** that the National Crime Records Bureau puts out every year, it is clear that despite the rise in sedition cases, convictions happen in barely a few. Even if these people are not convicted, the slapping of these charges is a way the governments over the years have been sending a strong message to its own people—obey or be ready to face consequences.
- **What is Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code?** Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law shall be punished with imprisonment for life or any shorter term, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with

fine.

- **Why should it be scrapped?** Draconian laws such as the Section 124-A only serve to give a legal veneer to the regime's persecution of voices and movements against oppression by casting them as anti-national.
- **What has Supreme Court ruled?** The Supreme Court has persistently held that for the offence of sedition to be satisfied, there has to be a causal relationship between speech and acts of violence, and mere speech, regardless of how subversive it is, does not amount to sedition.
- **Short term measures to be put up in place:** All speech-related offences should be made bailable offences; this would lessen the harmful impact of using arrest and custody as a way of harassing anyone exercising their rights under Article 19(1)(a).
- **The offences** should be made non-cognisable so that there is at least a judicial check on the police acting on the basis of politically motivated complaints.
- **In the case of hate speech**, it is important to raise the burden of proof on those who claim that their sentiments are hurt rather than accept them at face value. And finally, it is crucial that courts begin to take action against those who bring malicious complaints against speech acts.

Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana Achieves one crore Milestone

- **Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)**, the flagship scheme of the Central Government for employment generation has crossed the milestone of one crore beneficiaries as on January 14, 2019.
- **PMRPY was announced on August 07, 2016** and is being implemented by Ministry of Labour and Employment through the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO). Under the scheme, Government is paying full employers' contribution of 12% (towards Employees' Provident Fund and Employees' Pension Scheme both), for a period of 3 years in respect of new employees who have been registered with the EPFO on or after 1st April 2016, with salary up to Rs. 15,000 per month.
- **During 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19** (up to January 15 2019) 33,031, 30,27,612, and 69,49,436 beneficiaries respectively, have been enrolled with EPFO under PMRPY. The number of establishments who have benefitted during the implementation of the scheme is 1.24 lakh. The entire system is online and AADHAR based with no human interface in the implementation of the scheme.
- **PMRPY has a dual benefit i.e. on the one hand**, the employer is incentivised for increasing the employee base in the establishment through payment of EPF contribution of 12% of wage, which otherwise would have been borne by the employer and on the other hand, a large number of workers find jobs in such establishments. A direct benefit is that these workers have access to social security benefit through Provident Fund, Pension and Death Linked Insurance. The terminal date for registration of beneficiaries through an establishment under the PMRPY is March 31, 2019.

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* Posted On: 17 JAN 2019 5:07PM by PIB Delhi 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 HMS 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-cas.gov.in.

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 & NCPCR 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 IGNSA.
- **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.
- **SATTVIK: Like previous years,** SATTVIK 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 are 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.
- **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 DBT Schemes have been integrated with DBT Bharat 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.

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 CCLs 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 CCLs/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 CClIs 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 CClIs:** In order to ensure protection of children living in CClIs, 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 CClIs 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 CClIs. 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 CClIs across the country have been registered under the JJ Act. 539 CClIs 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 CClIs 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 NCPDR 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 Anganwadi 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 SABLE 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 disbursal 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 Anganwadi 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.
- 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: i. Swachhta Hi Sewa: 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 Seva 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.
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Year end Review: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways 2018: the Highway Construction Year

- INTRODUCTION** The year 2018-19 was declared by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways as the YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION. This was a year for consolidating the gains that have accrued from major policy decisions taken in the previous four years, a time for monitoring of ongoing projects, tackling road blocks and adding to the already impressive pace of work achieved last year. The Ministry took a decision to complete all ongoing projects that had been awarded upto 2015-16, and placed the highest ever target of constructing at least 12,000 kms of national highways as against 9829 kms achieved during 2017-18, and make special efforts to take this length to 16000 km. Overall, more than about 61,300 km length of road projects, costing more than Rs. 6.48 lakh crore, are in progress at present. The balance ongoing works (which have been awarded, appointed dates declared and works going on at sites) are more than 30,200 kms during the year. In the first nine months of FY 2018-19, 5,759 km has been completed in 18-19 against 4,942 km up to same period in last year.
- 1.2 In order** to achieve this target the Ministry brought in policies, guidelines and practices for expediting pre-construction activities and bringing in more efficiency and transparency in the process. The Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) was developed to streamline the process of pre-qualification of bidders for contracts on EPC Mode. BhoomiRashi portal is being used extensively for expediting the process of notification for land acquisition. The portal BIMS and BhoomiRashi portals have further been linked with Public Financial Management System (PFMS) to facilitate real time payment to beneficiaries.
- 1.3 On the finance front too**, National Highways Authority of India did a successful financial closure of its first project under Toll- Operate –Transfer this year and offered 586 km of national highways under the second bundle. The first TOT bundle of 9 projects, totaling approximately 681 KM of roads in two states of Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, was awarded earlier during the year for Rs. 9,681 Crore, which was 1.5 times the Authority's estimate. National Highways Authority of India (NHA) also got an unsecured loan of Rs 25,000 crore from State Bank of India for 10 years with 3 years of moratorium on repayments. This is the largest amount of loan to have been sanctioned to NHA in one stroke by any institution. This is also the largest long term unsecured loan sanctioned by SBI at a time to any entity.
- The year has also seen** a lot of movement in the transport sector, with focus on reducing carbon footprint while enhancing road safety, efficiency and convenience of road users. An MoU signed with 'Transport for London' (TFL) to revamp the public transport system in the country, building mini wayside amenities at toll plazas, establishing a quality – based ranking system for toll plazas, simplification of Driving License application, notifying emission standards for construction equipment vehicles and tractors, issue of guidelines to set up well equipped and competent Driving Training Centres (DTC) at district levels and for granting financial assistance to NGOs for undertaking road safety advocacy, launch of SukhadYatra App and Toll Free Emergency Number, the decision to allow free passage to user in case of malfunctioning of Electronic Toll Collection infrastructure, compensation of Rs. 5,00,000/- to road accident victims, notification regarding blending of gasoline with methanol in order to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions and import burden and linking of vehicle emission data with State/Central Register of Vehicles are all notable initiatives taken by the Ministry in this direction.

CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

- Award / Construction Statistics:** A two days long exercise was conducted to review of over 700 ongoing National Highway projects in the country, and over 300 projects were identified to be completed by 2019 achieving the highest ever construction in financial year 2018-19.
- Progress of Major Programmes/ Landmark Projects: Bharatmala Pariyojana: Phase-I** This is the umbrella program for the highways sector unrolled in 2017-18, that aims to optimize the efficiency of road traffic movement across the country by bridging critical infrastructure gaps. 34,800 km of National Highways are to be constructed under the Phase-I of the programme between 2017-18 to 2021-22 in a phased manner at a cost of Rs. 5,35,000 crore. This includes 5,000 kms of the National Corridors, 9000 kms of Economic Corridors, 6000 km of Feeder Corridors and Inter-Corridors, 2000 kms of Border Roads, 2,000 kms of Coastal Roads and Port Connectivity Roads and 800 kms of Green-field Expressways.
- Projects for 6,407 km** road length have been awarded under the Bharatmala Pariyojana (including residual NHDP) till the end of October this year. DPRs are being prepared for projects for the balance length. De-congestion projects have been completed for 13 out of 191 congestion points identified, and are under progress for de-congestion of 80 other points. In addition, DPRs are being prepared for 93 congestion points. Out of the 35 locations identified for Multimodal Logistics Parks, DPRs have been initiated for 7 locations and availability of land parcels is being confirmed with State Governments for the rest of the locations.

SetuBharatam

- **In order to ensure safe** and smooth flow of traffic, Ministry has envisaged a plan for replacement of Level Crossings on National Highways by ROBs/ RUBs under a scheme known as SetuBharatam. Under this programme, out of 174 ROBs/RUBs which are to be constructed, 91 have been sanctioned with an estimated cost of Rs.7,104.72 crore. Out of 91 sanctioned, 59 ROBs/RUBs have been awarded which are in various stages of progress.
- **ChardhamMahamargVikasPariyojna** The project envisages development of easy access to the four prominent Dhams, namely, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedranath and Badrinath, situated in the state of Uttarakhand. These four Dhams are prominent pilgrimage centres. The project entails development of 889 km of roads with configuration of two-lane with paved shoulders at an estimated cost of about Rs. 12,000 crore. The projects are being taken up on EPC mode and the programme is targeted for completion by March, 2020.
- **Eastern Peripheral Expressway– Western Peripheral Expressway** The two projects of Peripheral Expressways around Delhi, comprising 135 km Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE), and 135 km Western Peripheral Expressway (WPE) connecting NH-1 and NH-2 from Western and Eastern side of Delhi was completed this year and inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister in May 2018 and November 2018 respectively. The EPE was constructed by NHAI and WPE by Haryana Government. The two expressways were envisaged with the twin objectives of decongesting and de-polluting the national capital by diverting the traffic not destined for Delhi.
- **The EPE stretches from Kundli on NH 1 to Palwal on NH 2**, and was constructed at a cost of Rs. 4617.87 crore, in addition to Rs. 5900 crore were spent on acquiring 1700 acres of land. It was completed in a record time of about 500 days against the scheduled target of 910 days. It is a fully access-controlled six-lane expressway with a closed tolling system. The expressway has an iconic toll plaza equipped with electronic toll collection infrastructure, ITS control system of the entire EPE and a digital art gallery, with holographic models of major structures and making of the EPE. Weigh-in-Motion equipment at all 30 entry points, solar power on the entire length, eight solar power plants with a capacity of 4000 KW, rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation and 36 replicas of monuments depicting Indian culture and heritage are major features of this expressway. This project has generated employment opportunities of about 50 lakh man-days.
- **Delhi-Meerut Expressway Delhi-Meerut Expressway aims to provide a faster and safer** connectivity between Delhi and Meerut and beyond this, with Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The alignment of DME starts from Nizamuddin Bridge from Delhi and follows existing NH 24 upto Dasna. While one leg of DME will continue from Dasna on NH 24 to Hapur, a Greenfield alignment has been planned from Dasna to Meerut. The Expressway is being constructed in 4 packages. The total length of the project is 82 km, of which the first 27.74 kms will be 14-laned, while the rest will be 6-lane expressway. The project is likely to cost Rs 4975.17 crore.
- **The 8.36 km long Package -1 of the projects was inaugurated** by Hon'ble Prime Minister in May this year. It is a 14 lane, access-controlled section stretching from Nizamuddin Bridge to Delhi UP Border, and was completed in a record time of 18 months as against the earlier expected construction period of 30 months, at a cost of about Rs. 841.50 crore. This is the first National Highway in the country with 14 lanes, and has several features that would help reduce pollution. These include a 2.5-metre-wide cycle track on either side of the highway, a vertical garden on the Yamuna Bridge, solar lighting system and watering of plants through drip irrigation only.
- **Package II from UP Border to Dasna(19.28 km), Package –III - Dasna to Hapur(22.27) km and Package –IV - Green-field Alignment from Dasna to Meerut –(31.78 km)** are under construction and are likely to be completed by March 2019.
- **Vadodara-Mumbai Expressway The 473 km expressway will link Ahmedabad-Vadodara Expressway** to Mumbai-Pune Expressway thus providing Expressway connectivity from Ahmedabad to Pune for a length of about 650 Km.
- **Delhi – Mumbai Expressway This 1250 km Expressway is being developed along a new alignment** between Delhi and Mumbai, which passes through backward and tribal districts of Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. A sum of one lakh crore rupees will be spent on this expressway. It will reduce the distance between Delhi and Mumbai from the present 1450km through NH 8 to 1250 km, and the travel time to 12 hours. The sections of proposed highway from Delhi to Dahod in Rajasthan are under tendering, while the section between Vadodara to Ankleshwar in Gujarat have already been awarded. The DPR is under progress for the remaining sections.
- **Bangalore-Chennai Expressway DPR is under progress for this 260 km Expressway.** This is a green-field alignment. There are two existing roads connecting Bangalore-Chennai, one is via Hoskote (Bangalore)-AP then to Chennai & second is via Electronic City (Bangalore) Hosur(Tamil Nadu) and then to Chennai. The alignment of the proposed expressway is passing in between these two stretches.
- **Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway** Greenfield alignment is being explored for this 500 km long proposed Expressway. Nagpur-Hyderabad-Bangalore (NBH) Expressway DPR has been awarded and alignment finalization is under progress for the new green-field 940 km Nagpur – Hyderabad – Bangalore EXP. Kanpur Lucknow (KL) Expressway DPR is in progress for 75 km of Kanpur – Lucknow EXP
- **Varanasi Airport Road and Ring Road** Hon'ble Prime Minister inaugurated the 16.55 km, Rs 759.36 crore Varanasi Ring Road Phase-I and 17.25 km, Rs 812.59 crore Babatput-Varanasi road on NH-56 in November. It has reduced the travel time from Varanasi to the airport, and is proving a big relief to the people of Varanasi and to tourists providing a more convenient access to Sarnath, an important site for Buddhist pilgrimage.
- **ByetDwarka – Okha Bridge** The Ministry has taken up construction of a signature 4-lane Bridge to connect the mainland at Okha to Byet-Dwarka Island off the Gujarat Coast with this Signature Bridge spanning a length of 2.32 kms. The Project has been awarded on 01.01.2018 at a cost of Rs. 689.47 crores. This will be the longest span cable stayed bridge in India with the main span of 500 mtrs. The project is scheduled to be completed in a period of 30 months.

- **Bridge over Ganga in Phaphamau in Allahabad** Approval has been given for a project for construction of 9.9 km long new 6 - lane bridge across river Ganga on NH - 96 at Phaphamau in Allahabad with total capital cost of Rs. 1948.25 crore. The construction period for the project is three years and likely to be completed by December, 2021. The new bridge will resolve the traffic congestion on existing old 2 - lane Phaphamau bridge on NH-96 at Allahabad. The new bridge will also facilitate to the large congregation of people at Holy City Allahabad during Kumbh, Ardh-Kumbh and other yearly ritual baths at SANGAM in Prayag. This will give a boost to pilgrimage tourism and local economy of Holy city of Prayag. This new 6 - lane bridge will also be beneficial for the Lucknow / Faizabad bound traffic coming from Madhya Pradesh via National Highway - 27 and National Highway - 76 through Naini Bridge. In addition, this project of new bridge will generate direct employment during construction for about 9.20 lakh mandays.
- **Bridge over River Kosi at Phulaut in Bihar** Approval was given to a project for construction of 6.930 km long 4-lane bridge at Phulaut in Bihar, along with approval for rehabilitation and up-gradation of existing Birpur- Bihpur section of National Highway-106. The construction of this new Bridge will fill the existing 30 km long gap between Udakishanganj and Bihpur of National Highway Number 106 in Bihar, which will provide through connectivity between Nepal/ North Bihar/ East-West Corridor (passing through NH- 57) and South Bihar/ Jharkhand/ Golden Quadrilateral (passing through NH -2), besides full utilization of National Highway Number-31.
- **Logistics Parks A network of 35 Multimodal Logistics Parks** had been identified for development in the Phase – 1 of BharatmalaPariyojana. The availability of the land parcels for development of Multimodal Logistics Parks has been confirmed at 7 locations and DPRs have been initiated in all the nodes.
- **Zojila Tunnel This is a project for constructing a 14.150 km long, 2-lane bi-directional Zojila Tunnel** in Jammu & Kashmir. This would be India's longest road tunnel and the longest bi-directional tunnel in Asia. The construction of this tunnel will provide all weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh and will bring about all round economic and socio-cultural integration of these regions.
- **Silkyara- Bend - Barkot Tunnel** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the construction, operation and maintenance of the 2- Lane, 4.532 Km long Bi-directional Silkyara Bend - Barkot Tunnel on Dharasu-Yamunotri section along NH -134 in the State of Uttarakhand. The project forms part of the Chardham Plan. The construction period of the project is 4 years at an estimated cost of Rs. 1383.78 crore. Once complete, this stretch will reduce the travel distance from Dharasu to Yamunotri by about 20 Km and travel time by about an hour. It will also provide all weather connectivity to Yamunotri, encouraging regional socio-economic development, trade and tourism within the country. The project will be implemented by National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (NHIDCL).
- **Highways Projects in the North East** Around Rs. 1,90,000 crore worth of projects have been sanctioned for the construction of road projects for over 12,000 km in the North East region. The projects being executed by NHIDCL are to the tune of Rs. 1, 66,026 crore, covering 10,892 km of roads in all the eight NE states. Projects costing Rs. 17,257 crore have been allotted to the respective state PWDs. Further, projects costing Rs. 7,000 crore are entrusted to the NHAI.

Funding Models and Other Policies to Facilitate Construction of National Highways:

- **Measures to revive Languishing stalled projects** The Ministry has focused on completion of on-going projects along with sanction and award of new projects. A total of 73 projects (8,187 km) worth an estimated investment of Rs.1,00,000 crore were identified as Languishing Projects. The reasons for delay were identified and policy interventions undertaken to address the same.
- **Toll-Operate-Transfer Model** The Ministry is monetizing its road assets constructed with public funds through Toll-Operate-Transfer (ToT) scheme. The scheme envisages bidding of bundled national highways for a concession period of 30 years. The first bundle comprised 9 projects, totalling 681 km of roads in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. It was awarded in 2018 to Macquarie for Rs. 9,681 Crore, which was 1.5 times the NHAI's estimate. The second bundle comprises over 586 kms spread over four states – Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal and Bihar. The offer has 12 toll plazas across four highways.
- **MoU between NHAI and SBI** The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State Bank of India to receive Rs. 25,000 crore as a long-term, unsecured loan for 10 years. This is the largest amount of loan to have been sanctioned by the SBI in one go. This is also the largest ever fund that NHAI has ever received in one go.
- **Guidelines for alignment of National Highways** The Ministry has issued detailed guidelines for determination of proper alignment of NH projects, advising executing agencies to examine the feasibility of a green- field alignment, especially in the case of economic corridors, instead of widening existing highways. This has been done because widening involves acquisition of land for Right of Way (RoW), shifting of utilities and demolition of built up structure, all of which involves a lot of time and cost. Also, earlier highways were largely planned to be serpentine, linking all possible towns in the vicinity. This road geometry has been found to be sub optimal, especially in case of economic corridors. Bharatmala Pariyojana also calls for a corridor approach for economic corridors. It has also been found in a few test cases that it is feasible to acquire a RoW of 60 to 70 mtrs for a green field road project at the same cost as involved in the expansion of an existing road, especially when the associated costs and time taken in utility shifting, tree felling, additional compensation for demolition of structures coming in the RoW under expansion are taken into account.
- **Platform for e-Gazetting and Payment of Compensation for Land Acquisition through PFMS** A Web Utility has been developed whereby the land acquisition procedure for the NH projects, including processing of all LA related gazette notifications, are being done through a common platform called "BhoomiRashi". The Utility has been linked with the e-gazette platform of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, for publication of Gazette Notifications. The use of Bhumi Rashi has helped in cutting down the processing time from 2 to 3 months earlier to one to two weeks now.
- **BhoomiRashi** has also been integrated with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) platform of the Ministry of Finance for deposit of compensation in the account of landowners/interested persons on a real time basis, instead of being parked with CALA.

- **Bidder Information Management System** The Ministry has developed a Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) to streamline the process of pre-qualification of bidders for contracts on EPC mode for all NH works and centrally sponsored works. BIMS acts as a data base for all basic details of bidders like civil works experience, cash accruals and network, annual turnover etc.,. This allows quick pre-qualification assessment of bidders based on evaluation parameters like threshold capacity and bid capacity from already stored data. Technical evaluation can therefore be carried out faster using this information.

Launch of Annual Awards for Excellence In National Highways Sector

- **Annual awards for excellence in National Highways sector has been instituted from** this year onwards for recognizing concessionaires and contractors who have been performing exceptionally well. Applications have been invited from all the concessionaires and contractors working in the field of highways construction and tolling. These awards are designed across the five categories of construction management, operation and maintenance, best toll plaza, safest highway, innovation in design and construction technology.
- **Highway Capacity Manual** India's first Highway Capacity Manual developed by CSIR-CRRI was launched this year. The manual is designed to be a tool for guiding road engineers and policy makers in the country. It lays down guidelines for the development and management of different types of roads, based on traffic characteristics on such roads having varying lane configurations.
- **Workshop on issues relating to Land Acquisition, Contract Document etc.** The Ministry has organized a workshop on 18.12.2018 in Delhi for Regional Officers of Ministry, NHAI and NHIDCL to discuss the issues relating to land acquisition, contract document (EPC/DPR) and E-Disha (ERP projects), new standards and technical specifications. A Manual of Guidelines on Land Acquisition for National Highways under the National Highways Act, 1956 has also been released for seamless process of Land Acquisition for National Highways.
- **ROAD SAFETY Reduction in number of road accidents** As per the Ministry's annual report on road accidents based on the data reported by Police authorities throughout India, there has been some marginal reduction in the number of road accidents and fatalities in 2017.
- **The Ministry has been making concerted efforts** to address the problem of road safety through a series of measures that include improving road infrastructure, road safety audits, identification and rectification of black spots on roads and strengthening the automobile safety standards, organizing road safety awareness programmes and strengthening enforcement etc. These efforts have started showing some results.
- **Rectification of Accident Black Spots** The Ministry has so far identified 789 road accident black spots in various States of which 651 ON National Highways and 138 are on State roads. Work for rectification of these black spots is at various stages of completion.
- **Guidelines for setting up Driver Training Schools in districts** The Ministry has been working in association with States, Vehicle manufactures and NGOs for strengthening the driving training. Institute of Driving training and Research (IDTRs), Regional Driving Training Centres (RDTCs) and Driving Training Centre (DTC) have been established which act as model Driving Training Centres with state of art infrastructure. Ministry has also launched a scheme for creating driving training centres in all the districts of the country and support refresher-training programme for heavy commercial vehicles drivers. The Ministry is implementing a scheme for setting up of Model Institute of Drivers Training and Research (IDTR) by States/UTs. So far 24 (nos.) IDTRs have been sanctioned in different States/UTs and about 16 are complete and functioning.
- **Guidelines for financing NGOs for road safety advocacy** The Ministry has issued guidelines associating Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for promoting awareness about road safety under a scheme titled "Grant of financial assistance for administering Road Safety Advocacy and awards for the outstanding work done in the field of Road Safety". It is envisaged that the NGOs will undertake activities for creating road safety awareness among citizens.
- **Sukhad Yatra App and Toll-Free Emergency Number** A mobile App and Toll-free Emergency number 1033 for highway users, developed by NHAI, were launched in March this year. The Sukhad Yatra mobile application provides information on toll gates. The key feature of the app includes a provision for the user to enter road quality-related information or to report any accident or pothole on the highway. It also provides users with real-time data related to waiting time expected at toll plazas and various facilities like points of interest, highway nest/ nest mini, etc. The app can also be used to purchase FASTags.
- **The toll-free number 1033 will enable users** to report an emergency condition, or highway-related feedback, across the highway. The service has also been integrated with ambulance / tow away services along the roads.
- **Observance of the 29th National Road Safety Week** This Ministry observed the 29th National Road Safety Week from 23rd to 30th April 2018. This year's focus was on schools and commercial drivers and the theme was "Sadak Suraksha Jeevan Raksha". In the opening ceremony the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways emphasized the Ministry's priorities in ensuring safety of road users in the country. Awards were given to 10 school children who won the national level essay competition on road safety. The Hon'ble Minister also administered the road safety pledge to all those present on the occasion. A variety of programmes related to the Road Safety were also organized in several cities across the country to enlighten people on Road Safety, and Driving Rules. Many NGOs participated in the Ministry's efforts to create awareness about the issue.
- **GoM on Road Safety** The Ministry had constituted a group of State Transport Ministers under the Chairmanship of Shri Yunus Khan, Transport Minister of Rajasthan to work out interstate issues and reach a consensus on adoption of uniform rates of taxation, permits and other issues. A Group of Transport Ministers from 13 states met in Guwahati on 18-19 April this year and adopted a 9-Point Guwahati Declaration aimed at harmonization of taxes and permits, road safety measures, policy changes and measures for strengthening State Road Transport Undertakings. The most important decisions taken by during the meeting included the recommendation for One Nation One Tax for the diverse road tax structure, which would ease travel.

- **Rs. 5 Lakh Compensation to accident victims:** In order to help accident victims in getting reasonable and fast compensation from insurance companies, the Ministry revised the relevant rules of the Motor Vehicles Act according to which every accident victim or his next of kin will be entitled to a compensation of Rs 5 lakh in case of death, and upto Rs 5 lakh, proportionate to the extent of injury in case of grievous hurt and disablement. Accident victims can claim higher compensation through court if they are not satisfied, but with this rule even the poorest of the poor will get a fast and reasonable compensation.
- **CCTV installation at Toll Plazas:** A Central Command and Control Centre is being set up at the NHAI HQ for CCTV surveillance and Monitoring of Vehicular Congestion at 210 Fee Plazas of National Highways that have higher traffic volumes. It is proposed to be connected with Regional Offices and the project execution is on service model for a period of five years.
- **Films on Road Safety: Three short films for generating public awareness** for the need to comply with the rules of the road, eventually contributing to the cause of road safety, were launched by Hon'ble Minister for Road Transport & Highways, on 14th August, 2018. Film actor Shri Akshay Kumar who featured in these films on pro bono basis, has also been appointed as Road Safety Brand Ambassador by the Hon'ble Minister.
- **Capacity Building in the area of Road Safety:** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has designated the Asian Institute of Transport Development as an apex body for capacity building in the area of road safety. The objective is that this centre would act as a depository of research studies and best practices. Human resource development and exchange of knowledge form an important component of its activities. Up to October 2018, the National Centre for Road Safety has been able to train over 1,400 professionals in road safety and road safety audit by conducting 31 courses pan India.

INITIATIVES IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR:

- **The Ministry took several initiatives** in the transport sector during the year to make road travel more convenient for people. Some of these areas under-
- **Simplification of Driving License Application** To improve ease in licensing, this Ministry has simplified the driving license application form. Four forms i.e. (a) Learner License, (b) Driving License, (c) Renewal of License, and (d) updation of Address - all have been consolidated into one. The new form will enable Aadhar based verification of the applicant's identity to provide online services for renewal, change of address etc. Another highlight of the new form is that it would capture an applicant's willingness for organ donation.
- **Revision of Axle Weight:** The permissible safe axle weight of goods vehicles was revised and increased by about 15% to 20 % for different configurations of axles. The decision was taken with a view to help in increasing the carrying capacity of goods transport vehicles and bring down logistics cost. The amendment will increase the carrying capacity of goods vehicles by about 20-25 % and lower logistics costs by about 2%. It will also bring down the incidence of overloading. While automobile technology and road construction quality have improved greatly over the years, the axle loads have remained the same since 1983 when they were last notified. There was a felt need to harmonize the axle load with international standards.
- **Launch of Ranking System for Toll Plazas** NHAI has developed a matrix-based methodology to rank the Fee Plazas on parameters such as electronic tolling, time taken in clearance of FASTag lanes, display panels, staff behaviour, cleanliness, etc. The data for the matrix is to be collected by the Regional Officers who will use the same to rank the Fee Plazas under their jurisdiction. Meanwhile, a countrywide drive was launched by NHAI on more than 300 toll plazas across the country on 10 February, 2018, to address issues that affect highway users. Officers visited toll plazas and addressed issues of user convenience and took feedback from the people.
- **Revision in Maximum Speed of vehicles** The Ministry has revised the maximum speed of various classes of vehicles vide notification dated 6th April 2018. The notification prescribes the speed of various classes of vehicles. Thus a passenger vehicle with not more than 8 seats including driver can have a maximum speed of 120 km/hr on expressways and 70km/hr on municipal roads.
- **Acceptance of Documents through DigiLocker and mParivahan Platform** An advisory has been issued by the Ministry to all the States / UTs to accept the documents in electronic form through DigiLocker platform of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India and the mParivahan mobile app of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways. Such electronic records available on DigiLocker or mParivahan are deemed to be legally recognized at par with the original documents as per the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000. This will also address Grievances / RTI applications of the citizens and facilitate promotion of Digital India campaign.
- **Notification regarding Vehicle Location Tracking Device and Emergency Button in all public service vehicles** With a view to enhancing the safety of women passengers, detailed standards for Installation of Vehicle Location Tracking Device (VLT) and Emergency Button on public service vehicles have been notified on October 25, 2018. The States/ UTs have been mandated to ensure compliance of the rule and check fitment and functional status of the VLT device in the public service vehicles at the time of checking of the vehicles for fitness certification. The Command and Control Centres in the States will be used to provide interface to various stakeholders such as State emergency response centre, the Transport authorities of the state and central governments, device manufacturers and their authorized dealers, testing agencies etc. The Command and control Centre will also be able to provide feed to the VAHAN database or the relevant data base of the state with regard to over speeding and the health status of the device.
- **Fitness Certificate in respect of Transport Vehicle** As per this notification the renewal of the fitness certificate in respect of transport vehicle up to eight years old shall be done for two years and for one year for vehicle older than eight years. No fitness certification shall be required at the time of registration for the new transport vehicle sold as fully built vehicle and such vehicle shall be deemed to be having certificate of fitness for a period of two years from the date of registration.

- **Use of Dual Fuel** The Ministry has issued a notification for Dual fuel usage which covers Emission of smoke and vapour from agriculture tractors, power tillers, construction equipment vehicles and combine harvesters driven by dual fuel diesel with Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) or Bio-Compressed Natural Gas (Bio-CNG) or Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) engines.

GREEN INITIATIVES:

- **Electric, Ethanol and Methanol Vehicles exempted from Permit** Keeping in view the need for promoting electric mobility and alternate fuels, the Ministry, vide notification issued on October 18, 2018, has exempted Battery Operated Vehicles, as well as vehicles driven on Methanol fuel or Ethanol fuel, from the requirement of permit for carrying passengers or goods.
- **Advisory on Linking of PUC data (emission related data)** with the VAHAN database A system has been developed and tested by this Ministry for linking of Pollution Under Control (PUC) data with the VAHAN database. An advisory dated October 1, 2018 has been issued to all the States by the Ministry wherein all the PUC vendors have been directed to comply with the guidelines and facilitate electronic uploading of emissions test data to VAHAN database.
- **Notification regarding Registration Mark of Battery Operated Vehicles** To give a distinct identity to the electric vehicles, it has been decided that the registration mark will be exhibited on a number plate with Green background. A notification to this effect was issued on 7th August, 2018.
- **M 15 (15%) Methanol blending with Gasoline** The Ministry issued a notification regarding the blending of Gasoline with methanol in order to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions and also to reduce the import burden on account of crude petroleum from which gasoline is produced. The Hon'ble Prime Minister had announced an ambitious target of reducing 10% import dependence of oil and gas by 2022 from 2014-15 levels. Methanol can be used as an alternative transportation fuel thereby reducing import dependence to some extent.
- **Requirement of PUC Certificate for vehicle insurance/ renewal of insurance** The Ministry has requested IRDA and the MDs / Chairpersons of all general insurance companies to ensure that no third-party insurance policy is issued or renewed without ascertaining the availability of a valid PUC. This has been done following orders of the Supreme Court of India.
- **Emission Standards for Construction Equipment Vehicles and Tractors** The Ministry has notified emission standards for Construction Equipment Vehicles and Tractors. These standards would be implemented w.e.f. 1st October, 2020 (Trem IV) and from 1st April, 2024 [Bharat Stage (CEV/Trem)-V]. This would help in ensuring environment friendly construction / mining activities.
- **Quadricycles included as Non-Transport Vehicles** The Ministry notified the insertion of the item 'Quadricycle' as a 'non-transport' vehicle under the Motor Vehicles Act 1988. A Quadricycle is a vehicle of the size of a 3-wheeler but with 4tyres and fully covered like a car. It has an engine like that of a 3-wheeler. This makes it a cheap and safe mode of transport for last mile connectivity. Quadricycles were only allowed for transport usage under the Act, but now has been made usable for non-transport also.

E INITIATIVES: 6.1 National Award on e-Governance to INAMPRO

- **The "INAMPRO" project initiated by NHIDCL, a CPSE under this Ministry**, has been conferred with a 'Gold' award under Category- I "Excellence in Government Process Re-engineering" for the National Award in e-Governance by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances.
- **6.2 Electronic Toll Collection (ETC)** The Electronic Toll Collection Program has seen exponential growth in terms of number of Fastags sold and user fees collected electronically. With a total number of 440 Toll Plazas, more than 34.3 lakh Fastags units have been issued till October this year, and 25 to 27% of the revenues are being collected using the ETC mode. Use of FASTag has also seen significant growth, both in terms of user fees collected and penetration, from Rs 210.1 Cr with 13.1% penetration in April 2017 to Rs 446. 8 Cr with 24.8% penetration in the month of August 2018.
- **6.3 Linkage of PFMS with Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) and BhoomiRashi** The two IT initiatives of this Ministry, which are aimed at expediting pre- construction processes relating to bidding and land acquisition respectively, have now been integrated with the Public Financial management System (PFMS). The Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) is aimed at streamlining the process of pre-qualification of bidders for EPC Mode of contracts for National Highway work with enhanced transparency and objectivity.
- **The BhoomiRashi portal** of Ministry of Road Transport & Highways allows for totally digital and paper-less processing of land acquisition cases, and has resulted in transparent, quick, corruption-free and error-free handling of land acquisition cases. It has also made the possible real-time tracking of activities and generation of reports relating to land acquisition.

- **Revenue records of about 7 lakh** villages across the country have been integrated in the portal. This digital change has drastically reduced the time taken for issuance of land acquisition notifications from 3-6 months to 1-2 weeks. Over 2000 notifications have already been issued by the Ministry in the first eight months of this financial year that while during the past two years, about a thousand land acquisition notifications could be issued every year.
- **The process has also brought transparency** in the system. Earlier the approved compensation amount used to be parked with the CALA (Competent Authority for Land Acquisition) but with BhoomiRashi portal this amount directly transferred into the account of the person concerned, through Public Financial Management System which is an integral part of the portal. In addition to this, the process is also environment friendly since there is no physical movement of files – all work is done digitally.
- **Advisory regarding keeping transport related** documents in an electronic form An advisory has been issued by this Ministry wherein the citizen can produce the transport related documents such as registration, insurance, fitness and permit, the driving licence, certificate for pollution under check and any other relevant documents, if required, in physical or electronic form, on demand by any police officer in uniform or any other officer authorized by the State Government in this behalf. This would enable the use of digital platforms for carrying and verification of the documents and is a step towards citizen facilitation and to ensure so that citizen are not harassed/ inconvenienced.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION MoU with Transport for London

- **The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** signed a MoU with Transport for London (TFL) on 10th January, 2018. TFL is an agency that manages the transport system for Greater London, and has demonstrated its capability by creating strong and dependable public transport system in the city of London. It has created a unique system of operating buses in PPP model with over 17 operators under a single brand. The MoUs aimed at using the expertise of TFL to revamp the public transport architecture in the country.
- **2nd meeting of India-Nepal Cross Border Transport Facilitation Working Group** After a long hiatus, the 2nd meeting of India-Nepal Cross Border Transport Facilitation Working Group was held at Kathmandu on 23rd February, 2018 under the India-Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement for regulation of vehicular traffic between the two countries. It was agreed to start regular bus services on the new routes of Mahendrangar- Dehradun, Nepalgunj- Haridwar, Nepalgunj- Lucknow, Nepalgunj -Delhi and Kathmandu-Gorakhpur, through designated operators from Nepal and India. It was also agreed to start operation of bus services on Kathmandu -Siliguri and Janakpur- Patna routes. Both sides also noted with mutual interest the possibility of opening of other routes to be considered on the basis of commercial demand and availability of infrastructure by mutual consent.
- **Bus trial run across Bangladesh, India and Nepal** Taking another step towards furthering seamless passenger vehicle movement across Bangladesh, India and Nepal (BIN) under BBIN MVA signed in June 2015. A trial run of two passenger buses from Dhaka, was conducted in April, 2018, with 43 passengers. The trial run started from Dhaka on 23rd April and reached Kathmandu on 26th April 2018. The participating countries have also agreed to conduct more trial runs for cargo vehicles under the agreement.
- **First Working Group Meeting of BIMSTEC** The first Working Group meeting of BIMSTEC to negotiate the draft text of Motor Vehicles Agreement for the regulation of passenger and cargo vehicular traffic among and between member states was held in April this year. Delegations from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Myanmar attended the meeting. The draft text of the agreement was discussed and amended. The member countries will further examine the amended text.
- **MoU between India and Uganda** An MoU was signed between the Central Materials Laboratory (ML), Kampala, Uganda and the Indian Academy of Highway Engineers (IAHE) under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, India, during the visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to Uganda on 24-25 July, 2018, for establishment of a Regional Materials Testing Laboratory for Highways in Uganda.
- **65th India-Japan Joint Working Group Meeting in the Roads and Road Transport Sector** The 5th India-Japan Joint Working Group Meeting in the Roads and Road Transport Sector was held on 12th November, 2018 in New Delhi as provided under the Framework of Cooperation (FoC) between the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), India and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), Japan. In the meeting, information regarding the latest technological developments in "Operation and Maintenance of Expressway", "Development of Mountainous Road in North East Regions" and "Countermeasure of Aging Structure" etc. was shared.
- **MoU of India with Russia** The proposal for a MoU on Bilateral Cooperation in the Road Transport & Road Industry sector, between Ministry of road transport & Highways and the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation, has been approved by the Union Cabinet in its meeting on October 3, 2018.
- **OTHERS: Wayside Amenities and Highway Nest (Mini)** While the procurement process is under way for the development of Wayside Amenities of larger sizes in PPP mode along the National Highways, the NHAI has taken up construction of 314 numbers Highway Nest (mini). These are being developed near Toll Plazas, approximately 200 meters downstream on a 10mX20m paved platform and comprises of facilities like toilets, water, ATR, a small kiosk with Tea / Coffee vending machine and packaged food items for Highway users.
- **Swachhta Pakhwada and 'Swachhta Hi Sewa' Campaign (SHS)** The Swachhta Pakhwada was organised by the Ministry between September 15, 2018 and October 2, across all National Highways. Several activities related to shramdaan and cleaning of schools in villages adjacent to the National Highways were also organized by the NHAI during the period. Construction of toilets, both for men and women, installation of litter-bins and hoardings at NHAI toll plazas have been taken up by the Ministry under Swachh Bharat Mission. The Ministry was conferred with a special award for its implementation of the Swachhta Action Plan for 2017-18 by the nodal Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

Goa's 'Opinion Poll Day'

- **Significance of the day:** It was on this date in 1967 that Goans voted against merging with Maharashtra and chose to remain a Union Territory. Though referred to as an 'opinion poll', the vote was in fact a plebiscite.
- **Background: Soon after Goa's liberation from** colonial Portuguese rule in 1961, murmurs began of a merger with Maharashtra on grounds of cultural similarity and the argument that Konkani was a dialect of Marathi and not an independent language. With several Indian states having been demarcated on a linguistic basis, the demand split the people of Goa into those who backed Konkani and wanted to remain independent of Maharashtra, and those who were in favour of Marathi and wanted to merge.
- **In December 1966, Parliament passed the Goa, Daman and Diu (Opinion Poll Act), 1966,** "to provide for the taking of an opinion poll to ascertain the wishes of the electors of Goa, Daman and Diu with regard to the future status thereof and for matters connected therewith".
- **Majority of votes went against the merger.** Soon afterward began demands for statehood for Goa; however, it was only on May 30, 1987, that Goa became India's 25th state. Daman and Diu continue to be Union Territories. Konkani was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution on August 20, 1992 (71st Amendment).

Constitutional provisions for Nagaland to reject the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

- **Background: Nagaland, along with other** north-eastern States, has witnessed several protests following the passage of the Bill in the Lok Sabha.
- **Why the provisions of the Citizenship Bill may not be applicable to Nagaland?** Article 371(A) of the Constitution begins with the words "notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, no Act of Parliament in respect of...". This means that despite what is in the Constitution, no Act of Parliament shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides.
- **Nagaland is also protected by the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873,** whereby an Inner Line Permit is issued to outsiders for safeguarding the citizenship, rights and privileges of the Nagas.
- **Why Assam and other NE states are opposing this bill?** The bill seeks to facilitate granting of Indian citizenship for non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In Assam, illegal migrants are not identified along religious lines and people want such migrants to be deported.
- **Mizoram fears Buddhist Chakmas** from Bangladesh may take advantage of the Act. Meghalaya and Nagaland are apprehensive of migrants of Bengali stock. Groups in Arunachal Pradesh fear the new rules may benefit Chakmas and Tibetans. Manipur wants the Inner-line Permit System to stop outsiders from entering the state.

Lokpal debate

- **Concerns raised:** The fact that the government has delayed the appointment this long is surely problematic. Besides, a Supreme Court order to nudge the government to make any progress towards establishing the anti-graft institution is a poor commentary on its functioning.
- **Background:** It has taken five years since the Lokpal Act, 2013, received the President's assent on January 1, 2014, for a Search Committee to even begin its work. It was formed only on September 27, 2018, after Common Cause, an NGO, filed a contempt petition against the government over the delay in constituting the authority despite a Supreme Court verdict in April 2017.
- **Way ahead:** It is true that setting up the Search Committee requires some groundwork, as its composition should be drawn from diverse fields such as anti-corruption policy, public administration, law, banking and insurance; also, half its membership should consist of women, backward class, minority and SC/ST candidates. However, it is the government's duty to expedite this process and not cite it as a reason for delay.

- **Related facts:** As per Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, the appointments to Lokpal is made by high-level selection committee comprising of Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, Lok Sabha Speaker, the leader of the largest opposition party and an eminent jurist chosen by them.

Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)

- **About Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana:** The scheme "Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana"(PMRPY) was announced in the Budget for 2016-17.
- **The objective of the scheme** is to promote employment generation. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Under the scheme employers would be provided an incentive for enhancing employment by reimbursement of the 8.33% EPS contribution made by the employer in respect of new employment. The PMRPY scheme is targeted for workers earning wages upto Rs. 15,000/- per month.
- **Significance of the scheme:** PMRPY has a dual benefit – The employer is incentivised for increasing the employee base in the establishment through payment of EPF contribution of 12% of wage, which otherwise would have been borne by the employer. A large number of workers find jobs in such establishments. A direct benefit of the scheme is that these workers have access to social security benefit through Provident Fund, Pension and Death Linked Insurance.

Gilgit-Baltistan

- **What's the issue?** The Supreme Court of Pakistan has extended its powers to Gilgit-Baltistan regarding the area's constitutional status. The order states that changes to the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan will be determined through a referendum which will be held within 14 days. It further read that until then, people living in the area and in Kashmir will be given fundamental human rights.
- **What has India said?** Entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, which also includes the so-called 'Gilgit-Baltistan' has been, is and shall remain an integral part of India. Pakistan government or judiciary have no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it. Any action to alter the status of these occupied territories by Pakistan has no legal basis whatsoever.
- **Where is Gilgit Baltistan located?** Located in the northern Pakistan. It borders China in the North, Afghanistan in the west, Tajikistan in the north west and Kashmir in the south east. It shares a geographical boundary with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and India considers it as part of the undivided Jammu and Kashmir, while Pakistan sees it as a separate from PoK. It has a regional Assembly and an elected Chief Minister. The USD 46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also passes through this region.
- **Gilgit-Baltistan is home** to five of the "eight-thousanders" and to more than fifty peaks above 7,000 metres (23,000 ft). Three of the world's longest glaciers outside the polar regions are found in Gilgit-Baltistan.
- **Recent developments:** Pakistan, in 2017, proposed to declare the strategic Gilgit-Baltistan region as its fifth Province, a move that may raise concerns in India as it borders the disputed Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- **Why it wants to declare as fifth province?** With a \$50 billion investment in the CPEC, China would hardly want the territory through which the route passes to have a dubious status. Pakistan wants to give the impression of freezing its territorial ambitions in J&K in order to concentrate on the CPEC and remove any misgivings that the Chinese may have on the status of GB.
- **Declaration will also** help Pakistan to tap the fresh water resources in the region and to make use of it for agriculture, hydroelectricity generation etc. Such move can also help China to get increased access in region and counter India jointly with Pakistan.
- **Impediments ahead:** Gilgit- Baltistan is part of J&K and any such move would seriously damage Pakistan's Kashmir case. Two UN resolutions of August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949 clearly established a link between GB and the Kashmir issue. Making the region its fifth province would thus violate the Karachi Agreement — perhaps the only instrument that provides doubtful legal authority to Pakistan's administration of GB — as well as the UN resolutions that would damage its position on the Kashmir issue.
- **Any such move would** also be violative of the 1963 Pak-China Boundary Agreement that calls for the sovereign authority to reopen negotiations with China "after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India" and of the 1972 Simla Agreement that mentions that "neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation"
- **Pakistan would also have** to overcome the adverse reaction of Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC. While it can manage the reaction of people in "AJK", its constituency in J&K would be seriously damaged. Hurriyat leaders have already made this known.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana- Gramin (PMAY-G)

- **Performance analysis of the scheme:** Of the total 4.72 lakh beneficiaries identified across the country, only 56,694 have been allotted land. Among the best performing states in terms of land allotment are Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. States like Goa, Kerala and West Bengal have drawn a blank in terms of allotment of land to beneficiaries.
- **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.

Sustainable Catchment Forest Management launched in Tripura

- **Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) project:** The SCATFORM project aims to address issues such as forest cover loss and forest degradation have been mainly caused by shifting cultivation, which increases soil erosion risks on hill slopes especially in upper catchment areas.
- **Implementation:** It would be implemented mainly in upper catchments where forest degradation and soil erosion are severe and livelihood improvement needs are high. The project aims to the improve quality of forest in the catchment area by sustainable forest management, soil and moisture conservation and livelihood development.
- **The activities** undertaken under the project involves promotion of bamboo plantation, agroforestry based livelihood, eco-tourism development, development of value addition for bamboo and other Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) in order to create alternate livelihood opportunities for local communities. Cost sharing: The 80 per cent of the cost is contributed by JICA and the rest would be funded by the state and central governments.

Data Localization

- **What's the issue?** Data localization is a sensitive issue the world over and more so in India, given that this is a country of 1.3 billion people with over 1 billion mobile users. With technology developing rapidly, more and more devices becoming smarter and the Internet of Things taking over, a genuine concern around leakage of private data has gained ground.
- **What does Data Localization mean?** Data localization is the act of storing data on any device that is physically present within the borders of a specific country where the data was generated.
- **Why data localization is necessary for India?** For securing citizen's data, data privacy, data sovereignty, national security, and economic development of the country. Recommendations by the RBI, the committee of experts led by Justice BN Srikrishna, the draft ecommerce policy and the draft report of the cloud policy panel show signs of data localisation.
- **The extensive data collection** by technology companies, has allowed them to process and monetize Indian users' data outside the country. Therefore, to curtail the perils of unregulated and arbitrary use of personal data, data localization is necessary.

- **Digital technologies like machine learning (ML)**, artificial intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) can generate tremendous value out of various data. It can turn disastrous if not contained within certain boundaries. With the advent of cloud computing, Indian users' data is outside the country's boundaries, leading to a conflict of jurisdiction in case of any dispute.
- **Data localization** is an opportunity for Indian technology companies to evolve an outlook from services to products. International companies will also be looking at the Indian market, and this will benefit the growth of the local ecosystem. More data centres in India could mean new, power-hungry customers for India's renewable energy market. That means Data localisation could boost India's renewable energy.
- **Policies that imply data localization:** The Srikrishna Committee wants to localise data for law enforcement to have easy access to data, to prevent foreign surveillance, to build an artificial intelligence ecosystem in India, and because undersea cables through which data transfers take place are vulnerable to attacks.
- **In April, the Reserve Bank of India** imposed a hard data localisation mandate on payment systems providers to store payment systems data only in India. Barring limited exceptions, telecom service providers are not allowed to transfer user information and accounting information outside India.
- **Goals set in the Draft National Digital Communications Policy 2018**, and the Guidelines for Government Departments for Contractual Terms related to Cloud Storage 2017, draft e-commerce policy and the draft report of the cloud policy panel show signs of data localization.
- **Concerns / Challenges:** Several of the recommendations in including the draft e-commerce policy, falter on a key ground like they gloss over the negative economic impact of data localization. This approach exhibits lack of evidence-based policy making. Having data in India does not mean that domestic companies will be able to access this data. Localization might aid the growth of the data centre and the cloud computing industry in India, but as matter of wider public policy, such an approach is extremely myopic. Mandating localization is less of a solution for data protection and might be less relevant to promote e-commerce.
- **Given the comparative trade advantages** enjoyed by one section of Indian industry in this context, mandating a strict data localization regime could be perceived as a restrictive trade barrier and spur retaliatory measures. There is a possible rise in prices of foreign cloud computing services in case of a data localisation, and its impact on MSMEs as well as start-ups relying on these services.
- **The possibility of triggering** a vicious cycle of data localisation requirements by other countries as a response to India's possible data localisation will be detrimental for the global data economy. Growth will be restricted if data cannot be aggregated internationally. Infrastructure in India for efficient data collection and management is lacking.
- **Need of the hour:** There is an urgent need to have an integrated, long-term strategy for policy creation for data localisation. Data localisation needs to integrate a wide range of social, political and economic perspectives. Creating an opportunity for local data centres all over the country. Devising an optimal regulatory and legislative framework for data processors and data centres operating in the country.
- **Adequate infrastructure** in terms of energy, real estate, and internet connectivity also needs to be made available for India to become a global hub for data centres. Adequate attention needs to be given to the interests of India's Information Technology Enabled Services (ITeS) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries, which are thriving on cross border data flow.

B.Tech course in AI by IIT Hyderabad:

- **Context:** IIT Hyderabad has announced the launch of a full-fledged bachelor's programme in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. IIT Hyderabad has become the first institute in the country to launch full-fledged Bachelor's programme in AI technology. IIT Hyderabad will be the third institute to globally offer the B.Tech course in AI.
- **Places in News- Mount Shindake:** Context: A volcano- Mt Shindake has erupted on Kuchinoerabu Island of Japan. Kuchinoerabu Island belongs to Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan. The entire island lies within the borders of the Kirishima-Yaku National Park.

Palestine assumes chairmanship of G77:

- **Context: Palestine has taken over the chairmanship of G77 from Egypt.** How is chairmanship of G77 decided? The chairmanship of the G77 is based on the system of geographical rotation. 2019 was Asia's turn and the Asian group had unanimously endorsed Palestine. Egypt was representing the African Group of countries.

G77:

- **The Group of 77 (G77)** at the United Nations is a coalition of 134 developing nations, designed to promote its members' collective economic interests and create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the United Nations.
- **G77 was formed** on 15 June 1964 by the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries" issued at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- **Since China participates** in the G77 but does not consider itself to be a member, all official statements are issued in the name of The Group of 77 and China.

National Museum of Indian Cinema in Mumbai:

- **Context:** National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) has been inaugurated in Mumbai. The museum depicts the journey of over a century of Indian cinema in a story telling mode with the help of visuals, graphics, artifacts, interactive exhibits and multimedia expositions.

Chowmahalla Palace:

- **Context:** The restoration of the Chowmahalla Palace to its age-old grandeur has been completed.
- **Key facts:** Chowmahalla Palace is a palace of the Nizams of Hyderabad state. It was the seat of the Asaf Jahi dynasty and was the official residence of the Nizams of Hyderabad while they ruled their state. The palace was built by Nizam Salabat Jung.

Great Indian Bustard:

- **Context:** Wildlife activists have called for enforcement of recovery plan for the country's most critically endangered bird- Great Indian Bustard. Once the contender for becoming India's national bird, the Great Indian Bustard is now facing extinction.
- **Key facts:** Great Indian Bustard is listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, in the CMS Convention and in Appendix I of CITES, as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. It has also been identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.
- **Project Great Indian Bustard** — state of Rajasthan — identifying and fencing off bustard breeding grounds in existing protected areas as well as provide secure breeding enclosures in areas outside protected areas
- **Protected areas:** Desert National Park Sanctuary — Rajasthan. Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary – Andhra Pradesh. Karera Wildlife Sanctuary– Madhya Pradesh.

Shehri Samridhi Utsav:

- **What is it?** It is an event which aims to expand the outreach of National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable, showcase its initiatives and facilitate access of SHG members to the other government schemes. This is organized by Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.

Diffo Bridge:

- **Why in News?** Bridge over Diffo river on Roing-Koron-Paya road has been inaugurated in Arunachal Pradesh. The construction of the Bridge was undertaken by the Project Udayak of the Border Roads Organisation.
- **Key facts:** It would provide uninterrupted access between Dibang valley and Lohit valley region of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh. It would provide an all-weather Road to the troops deployed on the China Border.
- **Project Udayank** of the Border Roads Organisation was raised on June 1990 at Doomdooma Assam. The name of the project Udayank is synonymous to the land of rising sun which fits appropriately to the area it operates. It consists of two border road taskforces undertaking construction activities in the north-eastern region.

All about Brexit Deal:

- **Context:** The British Parliament has rejected the Brexit deal proposed by the Prime Minister Theresa May.
- **What and why did parliament reject?** The House of Commons has comprehensively rejected the 585-page draft withdrawal treaty that Mrs May agreed with the EU in November as well as on a non-binding political declaration that seeks to lay out the option for talks on longer term ties. The most contentious provision is a so-called backstop provision that would come into effect at the end of the transition period if no other solution was found to prevent a hard border in the island of Ireland. This would keep Northern Ireland in the bloc's single market for goods — and so retain much of the EU's authority over the province — while including the whole of the UK in a customs union with the bloc.
- **To minimise** any divergence with Northern Ireland, the British government has announced that if the backstop came into force, the rest of the UK would “track” Brussels' rulebook for goods regulation, keeping pace with new EU legislation.
- **Many Brexiters** denounce the backstop as a “trap” that would keep the UK yoked to EU rules. While Mrs May argues that neither London nor Brussels wants the measure to enter into force, some see it as a default scenario, since it could take until the mid-2020s to negotiate, ratify and implement any trade deal that could obviate the need for a backstop.
- **What's next?** The UK has now three options to choose from since UK is bound to leave EU by March. The options are: Reach to EU to further modify the agreement. Exit without any deal. This would be a doomsday scenario which would trigger a massive recession in Britain and markedly slow the European Union's economic growth. Hold another referendum on Brexit deal in Britain.
- **What does Brexit mean?** It is a word that is used as a shorthand way of saying the UK leaving the EU – merging the words Britain and exit to get Brexit, in the same way as a possible Greek exit from the euro was dubbed Grexit in the past.
- **Why is Britain leaving the European Union?** A referendum – a vote in which everyone (or nearly everyone) of voting age can take part – was held on Thursday 23 June, 2016, to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union. Leave won by 51.9% to 48.1%. The referendum turnout was 71.8%, with more than 30 million people voting.
- **When is the UK due to leave the EU?** For the UK to leave the EU it had to invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty which gives the two sides two years to agree the terms of the split. Theresa May triggered this process on 29 March, 2017, meaning the UK is scheduled to leave at 11pm UK time on Friday, 29 March 2019. A European court has ruled that the UK can decide to stop the process. Alternatively it can be extended if all 28 EU members agree.
- **What caused Brexit to happen?** So far, there seem to be three theories for what drove so many people to vote Brexit: Immigrants: Faced with rising immigration locals worried about their jobs and the erosion of the English way of life wanted their government to clamp down on immigration. This was a revolt against unrestricted immigration from poorer Eastern European states, Syrian refugees residing in the EU and millions of Turks about to join the EU.

- **Elites: Faced** with decades of economic malaise, stagnant real wages and economic destitution in former industrial heartlands ever since the rise of “Thatcherism” and the embrace of Neoliberal policies by Tony Blair’s New Labour the non-Londoners have decided to revolt against the elite. This isn’t just about being against the EU as it stands, and its free market and free movement of peoples.
- **Bureaucracy:** Faced with Brussel’s asphyxiating amount of red tape the English people decide to “take back control” of their country’s bureaucracy. The three theories are obviously intertwined at times and contradictory at others, that’s why it matters who is going to be negotiating the post-Brexit relationship between the UK and the EU.



Hurrying through a legislation: on reservation quota

- **Parliament ended the penultimate session** of this Lok Sabha with both Houses passing the Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill, 2019, that enables 10% reservation in education and employment for economically weaker sections. The process by which this was done illustrates the collective failure of parliamentarians to review the government's proposals and hold it to account.
- **Hasty steps Let us review the sequence of events.** On Monday (January 7), it was reported that the Cabinet had approved a Bill to provide reservation to poor candidates regardless of their caste, and that this would be introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the last day of the winter session. News reports also suggested that the Rajya Sabha would extend its session by a day, so that this Bill could be discussed on Wednesday. There was no formal press release by the Press Information Bureau.
- **The rules of procedure** of the Lok Sabha require every Bill to be circulated at least two days ahead of introduction. This is to give time for MPs to read the Bill and discuss it (or make objections) when the vote on the motion to introduce the Bill is taken up. This Bill was not circulated, even on Tuesday morning. At 11 a.m., when unstarred questions are tabled, one question concerned whether the government was "exploring the scope of providing reservation for poor candidates from forward communities for education and employment" and the details. The Ministry categorically denied that there was any such proposal under consideration. Then at 12.46 p.m., the Bill was introduced, with copies having been circulated to MPs a few minutes earlier.
- **The usual practice** is to refer Bills to the respective standing committee of Parliament. This step allows MPs to solicit public feedback and interact with experts before forming their recommendations. In the case of this Constitution Amendment — clearly one with far-reaching implications — this scrutiny mechanism was bypassed.
- **The debate** started around 5 p.m., just a few hours MPs had been given a copy. The debate ended around 10 p.m.
- **Meanwhile**, the Rajya Sabha hardly functioned that day due to repeated disruptions. Finally, the chair adjourned the House till the next day — the first official indication that the sitting was extended by a day. The next day, Wednesday, the Rajya Sabha took up consideration of the Bill around 2 p.m. and ended the debate just past 10 p.m. A motion was moved by some members to refer the Bill to a select committee, but this motion was defeated by a wide margin, and the Bill was then passed.
- **Let us summarise** the number of ways in which due oversight was skipped. The Bill was not circulated ahead of being introduced, it was not examined by a committee, there was hardly any time between its introduction and final discussion. Barring a few small parties, none of the larger Opposition parties asked for the Bill to be carefully considered by a parliamentary committee — even in the Rajya Sabha where they might have been able to muster the numbers to ensure this.
- **The British contrast** Contrast this with the incidents in the British Parliament the same day (Wednesday) when the Speaker ensured parliamentary supremacy over the government. A member of the ruling Conservative Party wanted to move an amendment to set a deadline for the Prime Minister to put forward new plans if she loses the Brexit vote next week. When the government objected that such amendments to set the business of the government in the House can be moved only by a Minister, the Speaker differed. He said that every member had a right to move an amendment. The motion was won by 308 votes to 297.
- **This case highlights** three important ways in which the British Parliament works better than ours. First, the absence of an anti-defection law, so that each MP can vote her conscience. Note that the motion that put the government in a spot was moved by a former attorney general and a member of the ruling party. Second, it is known exactly how each MP voted. In India, most votes (other than Constitution Amendments that need a two-thirds majority to pass) are through voice votes — just 7% of other Bills had a recorded vote over the last 10 years. Third, the Speaker insisted on the supremacy of Parliament, and allowed a motion against the wishes of the government. Unlike in India, the independence of the Speaker is secured in the U.K. as no party contests against the Speaker in the next general election.
- **Parliament** has a central role to secure the interest of citizens. It is the primary body of accountability that translates the wishes and aspirations of citizens into appropriate laws and policies.
- **Falling short** However, our Parliament often falls short of these goals due to some structural reasons. These include the anti-defection law (that restrains MPs from voting according to their conscience), lack of recorded voting as a norm (which reduces the accountability of the MP as voters don't know which way they voted on each issue), party affiliation of the Speaker (making her dependent on the party leadership for re-election prospects), frequent bypassing of committees (just 25% of Bills have been referred to committees in this Lok Sabha), insufficient time and research support to examine Bills, and the lack of a calendar (Parliament is held at the convenience of the government). We need to address each of these issues to strengthen Parliament and protect our democracy.

Smart Food Executive Council

- **About Smart Food Executive Council:** Formed under the aegis of the Smart Food Initiative that was launched in 2013.
- **Need: Stemmed** from the strategic thinking around the need for food that fulfils the criteria of being good for the consumer, good for the planet and good for the farmer. Objective: To diversify staples which can have the strongest impact on nutrition, the environment and farmer welfare.
- **Significance:** Given that staples may typically constitute 70% of a meal and are often eaten three times a day, diversifying them can have a pronounced impact on overcoming malnutrition and poverty and coping with climate change and environmental degradation.
- **This would contribute** to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for overcoming poverty and hunger (SDG 1 and 2), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), along with adaptation to climate change (Goal 13). The approach taken will include gender equality (SDG 5) and action through partnerships (SDG 17).
- **Future potential:** This new partnership strengthens collaborations between Asia and Africa and can open up opportunities to join forces at any point along the value chain, from consumers through to processors, chefs through to farmers, researchers and others.
- **Facts for Prelims:** The Smart Food initiative is founded by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics (ICRISAT) and aims to build food systems where the food is good for you (highly nutritious), good for the planet and good for the smallholder farmer. It is an initiative which will initially focus on popularizing millets and sorghum.

Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW)

- **About the Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW):** The Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW), comprising about 30 companies, pledged over \$1 billion to eliminate plastic waste across the world. They aim to invest \$1.5 billion over the next five years for the same.
- **The alliance is designed** as a non-profit organization. It includes companies from across North and South America, Europe, Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa as well as the Middle East are part of the Alliance.
- **The aim is to develop** solutions to mitigate plastic pollution and promote a circular economy by utilising used plastics.
- **Member companies** include those that make, use, sell, process, collect and recycle plastics, as well as chemical and plastic manufacturers, consumer goods companies, retailers, converters, and waste management companies, also called the plastics value chain. From India, Reliance Industries will advance efforts towards a sustainable future.
- **Significance:** Plastic waste management is a complex and serious global challenge that calls for swift action and strong leadership. The issue of plastic waste is seen and felt all over the world. It must be addressed. This new alliance is the most comprehensive effort to date to end plastic waste in the environment.
- **Way ahead:** Success will require collaboration and coordinated efforts across many sectors – some that create near-term progress and others that require major investments with longer timelines.
- **Addressing plastic waste** in the environment and developing a circular economy of plastics requires the participation of everyone across the entire value chain and the long term commitment of businesses, governments, and communities.

Global Economy Watch by PwC

- **PwC's Global Economy Watch** is a short publication that looks at the trends and issues affecting the global economy and details its latest projections for the world's leading economies.
- **A look at India's economy in 2019 as per the report:** India is likely to surpass the United Kingdom in the world's largest economy rankings in 2019. As per the report, while the UK and France have regularly switched places owing to similar levels of development and roughly equal populations, India's climb up the rankings is likely to be permanent. The report projects real GDP growth of 1.6% for the UK, 1.7% for France and 7.6% for India in 2019.

- **As per the report**, India should return to a healthy growth rate of 7.6% in 2019-20, if there are no major headwinds in the global economy such as enhanced trade tensions or supply side shocks in oil. The growth will be supported through further realisation of efficiency gains from the newly adopted GST and policy impetus expected in the first year of a new government.
- **Global Scenario:** The report notes that global economy as a whole is expected to slow in 2019 as G7 countries return to long-run average growth rates. PwC expects that the pick-up in growth of most major economies seen between the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2018 is now over.
- **The report** also notes that workers and wages will come to the fore and trade conflicts will deepen. The main focus of tensions is likely to remain US-China trade, but there will always be the risk of this escalating into a wider trade conflict and businesses accordingly need to plan for different scenarios.

ISRO's Young Scientist programme

- **About Young Scientist Programme:** Aim: Inculcate and nurture space research fervour in young minds. It would be a one month programme. The students will be exposed to the practical experience of building small satellites.
- **Eligibility:** Mostly 8th standard passed out students will be given lectures and access to research laboratories. 3 students from each of the 29 States and 7 Union Territories will be selected for the Young Scientist program.

'Operation Kabaddi':

- **What is it?** It was to be the largest planned operation by the Indian Army to end cross-LoC infiltration by capturing at least 25 selected Pakistani posts along the Line of Control (LoC) in September 2001. However, owing to some issues it was not carried out.
- **Operation Kabaddi** would include a "wide spectrum of evolving punitive operations such as the execution of deliberate fire assaults to destroy military and terrorist points, and area targets across the LoC; ambushes and raids across the LOC; and company, battalion, and brigade-sized deliberate offensive attacks to capture objectives of tactical importance across the LoC that would improve the Indian Army's counter-insurgency (CI) posture."
- **The objective of Operation Kabaddi** was to change the geography of the LoC with access to tactical points there, which would then help the Army tackle the infiltration of militants by the Pakistani side.
- **Why is it news now?** Former army commanders have revealed the details of this operation in the book, Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics.

Mentioned in the Hindu- Maniyaro:

- **MANIYARO is a variety of folk dance of Gujarat.** It carries the sentiments of heroism in the Dandiya RAAS of Maher community in Gujarat.
- **In Gujarat and especially** in Saurashtra region, generally Men wear traditional costumes, having preset sized wooden sticks and present Maniyaro. Maniyaro is usually being played with the ancient instruments like Drum, Flute, and RAVAN Hattho etc.
- **Lyrics of the songs** that are being sung in Maniyaro are sometimes flowing enjoyment, at times expressing the feeling of separation and sometimes inspiring heroism.

Aadhaar as travel documents to visit Nepal, Bhutan:

- **What?** Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians under 15 and over 65 travelling to Nepal and Bhutan. Indians other than those in the two age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel to the two neighbouring countries, for which no visas are needed.
- **Background:** Indian citizens going to Nepal and Bhutan have to have a valid passport, identity card issued by the Indian government or the Election Commission, they do not need a visa. Earlier, persons under the age of 65 and below 15 years could show their PAN card, driving license, Central Government Health Service (CGHS) card or ration card to prove their identity for the visit of these two countries. The Aadhaar card has now been added to this list.

33rd district of Tamil Nadu- Kallakurichi:

- **India's second defence industrial corridor:** What? Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor has been inaugurated. Key facts: The corridor is the second defence corridor being set up by the government to support various defence manufacturing units. The first one is being established in Uttar Pradesh.
- **The corridor** is also referred to as the Tamil Nadu Defence Production Quad as the nodal cities form a quadrilateral with one of them at the centre. The key aim behind setting up defence industrial corridors is to ensure connectivity among various defence industrial units. The development of the defence corridor will help facilitate a well-planned and efficient industrial base that will lead to an increased defence production in the country.
- **Small Woodbrown butterfly:** What? After a span of 120 long years, researchers in Sikkim have rediscovered the Small Woodbrown butterfly species from Bakhim in Khanchendzonga National Park.
- **Key facts:** The Small Woodbrown butterfly, scientifically known as *Lethe nicetella* is named after its brown-coloured wings patched with white round spots. It is amongst the smallest members of the genus *Lethe*, with wings that are up to 50 millimeters long.
- **The species** is endemic to the eastern Himalayas and occurs in forests lying between elevations of 1,800-2,800 metres. Distribution: Across the world, species of *Lethe* are found in Sunda Islands, Japan, Siberia, Himalayas and peninsular India. Of the 41 species of *Lethe* that are found in India, 32 species are reported from Sikkim alone.

Two new species of moss rose discovered in south India:

- **Names:** *Portulaca badamica* and *Portulaca lakshminarasimhaniana*. *Portulaca badamica* is named after the site of its discovery that is, the Badami hills, while the second new species—*Portulaca lakshminarasimhaniana*—honours Pakshirajan Lakshminarashimhan, who is the head of the Botanical Survey of India, western regional circle in Pune, for his significant contribution to plant taxonomy.
- **IUCN Status:** *Portulaca badamica*- data deficient category and *Portulaca lakshminarasimhaniana*- critically endangered.



Year End Review 2018: Ministry of Telecommunications

- **Six-fold increase in Government** spending on telecommunications infrastructure and services in the country – from Rs. 9,900 crores between 2009-14, to Rs. 60,000 crores (actual + planned) between 2014-19
- **Tariff reductions benefiting consumers across the country:** Average voice tariff declined by 67% – from an average per minute tariff of 51 paise in June 2014 to 11 paise in June 2018 Average data tariff declined by 96% - from Rs. 269 per GB in 2014, to Rs. 12 per GB in June 2018 Restoring the trust between Government and Citizens through a smooth and transparent auction of spectrum in 2015 and 2016 – more than 1382 MHz sold, realising an upfront payment of approximately Rs. 65,000 crores
- **For the spectrum auction of October**, 2016, DoT received an Excellence Award from CVC in November 2017, for “Transparency in e-auction of spectrum in 2016” Telecom service providers now have sufficient spectrum available to offer their services; the regime of spectrum shortage is a thing of the past
- **Under the BharatNet project**, which is expected to trigger the era of Broadband in rural India, nearly 50% of the total 2.5 Lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country have been connected through high-speed OFC network by October 2018, as compared to 59 GPs in June 2014; plan to complete the remaining GPs by March 2019 Network for Spectrum (NFS) project for Defence – project approved in July 2012; no cable laid until May 2014; 51,000 km of Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) laid in the last 4 years
- **Under BharatNet and NFS projects**, OFC laid at a peak rate of 800 km per day, with an average of more than 200 km per day – a record of sorts As a result of its' role in the BharatNet project, ITI Ltd. was able to report a net profit of Rs. 102 crores (without grants) for the year 2017-18
- **Proactive engagement, planning**, and investment to leverage new technologies for the welfare of citizens – High-Level Forum (HLF) for 5G India set up which submitted its report in August 2018; 5G test beds established through Industry-Academia partnership and government support; 5G field trials to be conducted over the next 12 months

Highlights in Figures

- **Increase in overall tele-density in the country** – from 75% in June 2014 to 93% in March 2018, adding 305 million new subscribers Mobile Internet subscriptions more than doubled – from 233 Million in March 2014 to 491 Million in June 2018 Over 107% increase in internet coverage – from 251 million users in June 2014 to 512 million in June 2018
- **Number of mobile Base Transceiver Stations (BTS)** more than doubled – from 7.9 lakh in May 2014 to more than 20 lakh in May 2018 Country-wide OFC coverage doubled – from 7 lakh km in May 2014 to 14 lakh km in May 2018 Average mobile data usage per subscriber grew 51 times – from 62 MB per month to 3.2 GB per month
- **Cheapest data tariff globally** – from Rs. 300 per GB in 2014 to Rs. 12 per GB in June 2018, tariff reduction of 96% Highest mobile data consumption globally at 3.4 Billion GB per month Seven times growth in broadband access – from 61 million subscribers in March 2014, to 447 million subscribers in June 2018
- **Digital payment transactions through mobile grew four times– from 168 million in November 2016 to 600 million now** Five times jump in FDI inflows in Telecom Sector – from USD 1.3 billion in 2015-16, to USD 6.2 billion in 2017-18
- **Connecting the Unconnected areas in the country:** Left-Wing Extremism Affected Areas – 2335 mobile towers installed in Phase I, at a total outlay of Rs. 4,781 crores; 4072 towers approved for installation in Phase II, with a total outlay of Rs. 7,330 crores
- **Biggest ever Telecom Spend in the North-East Region** –Ongoing projects with a total outlay of more than Rs. 10,800 crores, connecting border areas, highways, and unconnected villages Submarine cable connectivity to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, in addition to strengthening connectivity within the islands and in Lakshadweep – at an outlay of Rs. 2,250 crores
- **Extensive expansion of the Wi-Fi eco-system in rural areas, with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crores – 25,000 hot-spots by BSNL** in rural exchanges, 7,000 hot-spots (e-Choupals) by Common Service Centres (CSCs); Additional 1 million Hotspots planned by March 2019

- **Key reforms to facilitate the operation of a Robust, Competitive, and Sustainable Telecom Sector:** Spectrum sharing and trading allowed – to boost competition Spectrum harmonisation – resulting in freeing up spectrum for auction Sharing of passive (e.g., fibre, towers) and active (e.g., BTS) infrastructure Deferred Payment Liabilities – to reduce financial stress in the sector Easing of Right of Way (RoW) Rules and Charges – Ease of Doing Business Full mobile number portability
- **Virtual Network Operators (VNO) license introduced – for effective infrastructure utilisation** Input credit for VNO licensees allowed to ease tax burden
- **The National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP) 2018 – summarises our Aspirations and Determination:** Missions – NDCP 2018 Connect India – Universal broadband coverage at 50 Mbps Propel India – Attracting investments worth USD 100 Billion Secure India – A strong, flexible, and robust communications infrastructure and data protection regime
- **Objectives – NDCP 2018** Providing Broadband to all by 2022 Adding 4 million jobs in the sector Digital Communications sector to grow to 8% of India's GDP by 2022 (present 6%) To bring India to the top 50 rank (from present 134) in the ICT Development Index of the International Telecom Union Net positive international trade in the sector – through increased local manufacturing and exports, and lower imports Ensuring Digital Sovereignty of the country

Department of Posts – Highlights and Achievements

- **Average annual Speed** Post revenue more than doubled – from Rs. 788 crores between 2006-14 to an average revenue of Rs. 1,682 crores between 2014-18. Revenue of Rs. 415 Crores from the e-Commerce business in 2017-18, with a growth of more than 20% over the previous financial year
- **Established a separate Parcel Directorate**, in order to focus on this growing business segment; 42 parcel centres and 242 nodal delivery centres have already been established to handle increased volume of consignments Launched at all 650 IPPB branches co-located in District HQ Post Offices along with 1,01,173 Access Points
- **IPPB will offer a 360-degree financial services suite across multiple channels – to benefit the unbanked and under-banked** IPPB Stats (between 1st Sep 2018 and 1st Jan 2019): Total Accounts Opened: 20.11 Lacs Cumulative Value of Transactions: INR 561 Crores Cumulative Volume of Transactions: 12.87 Lacs 995 DoP ATMs are now inter-operable with other Banks.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Scheme: Out of total 1.52 Crores enrolments, 1.31 crores done through Post Offices** Aadhar Enrolments & Updation Centres have been made functional in 13,352 Post Offices across the country till date; more than 8 Lakh enrolments and 29 lakh updates have already been completed in these centres
- **254 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs)** started across the country in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs – to provide passport services through POPSKs/PSKs in each parliamentary constituency; more than 17.5 lakh passport appointments have already been processed in these POPSKs. Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) – insurance products from the DoP, with the unique feature of 'low premium, high bonus';
- **renewed drive** to extend the benefits of these products to promote financial inclusion in the country Total Assets Under Management (AUM) (including GOI Special Securities/Floating Rate Bonds) in PLI and RPLI increased by 2.0 times between March 2014 and September 2018 – from Rs. 25,856 crores to Rs. 93,068 crores Benefits of Postal Life Insurance (PLI) are no longer limited to Government and Semi-Government employees; this facility is now also available to professionals (teachers, lawyers, engineers, doctors, CAs) and employees of listed companies of NSE and BSE
- **Under Sampoorna Bima Gram Yojana**, at least one person insured from each household in 2,529 villages nation-wide; 10,000 villages targeted by March 2019 A philately scholarship scheme called Deen Dayal SPARSH (Scholarship for Promotion of Aptitude & Research in Stamps as a Hobby) Yojana was introduced in November, 2017 to promote Philately among children; under the scheme, 920 scholarships will be given every year to school-children who demonstrate interest in philately. This year as of now 83,861 students have applied under the Scholarship Scheme.
- **Department of Posts** has been issuing stamps on people centric themes. Some of the themes on which stamps have been issued recently are – Ramayana, Mahabharata, Indian Cuisine, Solar System, Safdarjung Hospital etc. Circular Postage Stamps to mark the commencement of 150th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi were issued by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 2nd October 2018. This is the first time in the history of Independent India that Circular Postage Stamps have been issued.
- **Technology investments** in the Department have increased from Rs. 434 crores between 2010-14 to about Rs. 1087 crore (upto Sep, 2018) between 2014-18. More than 1.29 lakh SIM based handheld devices are in use by Gramin Dak Sewaks in Branch Post Offices.
- **5.21 crore** transactions have been processed successfully on National Automated Clearing House (NACH) platform since December 2016, handling more than Rs. 3,904 crores
- **Postman mobile** application has been introduced to update the delivery information of accountable mail, including cash on delivery, on a real time basis

Appointment of Chief Information Commissioner

- **What's the issue?** DoPT had informed the Supreme Court that the search committee was to shortlist candidates "out of the applications received." However, later it was found that shortlisting had been done outside the list of applicants, in violation of procedure laid out by the department in their own affidavit to the Supreme Court.
- **However**, the department defends its move by saying that the search committee is not restricted to applicants, but to deserving candidates.
- **Need of the hour:** We need transparency at every stage, and public scrutiny to prevent such an arbitrary process. Centre and states to maintain transparency in appointments of Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners and upload the details of search committees and applicants on website.
- **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.

Manipur People's Protection Bill

- **What's the demand?** The state has submitted a memorandum to Home Minister Rajnath Singh to give President's assent to the Manipur Peoples (Protection) Bill, 2018. It will protect the interests of people of the State.
- **Manipur People's Protection Bill, 2018:** It seeks to regulate the entry and exit of "outsiders" on the lines of the British-era inner-line permit system prevalent in three other north-eastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. The bill sets 1951 as the base year to identify locals and prevent an influx of outsiders.
- **Who are Manipuris and non- Manipuris?** According to the bill, Manipur people include Meitis, the Pangal Muslims, scheduled tribes as listed under the Constitution in terms of Manipur and all those citizens of India who have been living in Manipur before 1951.
- **The rest have been** put in the category of non-Manipuris and will have to register themselves within one month of the notification of the law. They will be issued a pass extendable up to six months. While those who have trade licences can get a pass extendable up to five years, which will have to be renewed every year. Any outsider visiting Manipur would need a pass.
- **Rationale behind the Bill:** The influx of foreign tourists has increased exponentially in Manipur, thus creating a demographic imbalance in the region. If this was not enough, illegal immigration from Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar has also contributed to the crisis. This has created fear among the locals over employment and availability of resources.
- **At a time** where there already exists stiff competition between the locals and outsiders over jobs, the outsiders mostly settle for low paid work. Hence, locals feel ILP fails to safeguard the interests of the indigenous people.
- **WHAT IS THE INNER LINE PERMIT?** The Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document issued by the Government of India to grant inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period. It is obligatory for Indians residing outside those states to obtain permission prior to entering the protected areas.

- **Currently**, the Inner Line Permit is operational in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. The document has been issued under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 and the conditions and restrictions vary from state to state.
- **It can be issued** for travel purposes solely. Visitors are not allowed to purchase property in these regions. However, there might be a different set of rules for long term visitors, though they are not valid for central government employees and security forces.

International Solar Alliance

- **Context:** The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is going to propose a new bank exclusively for financing energy access to billions.
- **The proposal- The bank is still at the ideation stage:** ISA has asked the Asian Development Bank to prepare a concept note. A public-private partnership is being thought of for the proposed, which will work for 1.2 billion people who lack access to energy as well as the 2.4 billion who lack access to clean energy.
- **Need:** Existing banks do not focus on universal energy access—those still deprived are the poorest of the poor; thus, out of the ambit of these banks. Therefore, we need special finance mechanism which can target these people.
- **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.



Year End Review 2018: Ministry of Tribal Affairs

- **VAN DHAN YOJANA** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has launched a game-changing initiative for tribal people - The Van Dhan Yojana, with the launch of the first Van Dhan Vikas Kendra at Bijapur by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on 14th April, 2018. It aims to provide skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.
- **As per the plan, TRIFED will** facilitate establishment of MFP-led multi-purpose Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, a cluster of 10 SHGs comprising of 30 tribal MFP gatherers each, in the tribal areas. This initiative is aimed at mainstreaming 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%. About 3000 such Van Dhan Kendras are proposed to be set up in two years in the forested Tribal Districts of the country.
- **To begin with,** this initiative is proposed to be taken up on priority in the 39 Districts with more than 50% tribal population and to then gradually be expanded to other Tribal Districts in India. The initiative aims to promote MFPS-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans.
- **MFP or what** may be more aptly referred to as Non Timber Forest Produces (NTFPs) are the primary source of income and livelihood for about 5 crore tribal people in the country.

AADI MAHOTSAV

- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** organized a National Tribal Festival named as 'Aadi Mahotsava' from 16th November, 2018 to 30th November, 2018 with the help of TRIFED to celebrate, cherish and promote the spirit of tribal craft, culture, cuisine and commerce at Delhi Haat, INA. This festival was inaugurated by Sh Jwal Oram, Hon'ble Minister of Tribal Affairs.
- **More than 1000 Artisans** from 20 States, 80 Tribal Chefs and 14 Dance Troupes comprising more than 250 Artists participated in the Mahotsav. Highlights of the Mahotsav were – Live demos for traditional tribal food and drink; Lac bangles; demo for 4 different schools of painting i.e. Warli, Pithora, Gond and Saura; Fashion show for tribal textiles, fashion accessories etc.
- **Tribal products** displayed at Mahotsav included heritage collection of Sarees, Men's collection including cotton, woollen and silk Jackets, Kurtas from MP, Rajasthan and Jharkhand; Bell Metal from Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh; Paintings from Gujrat, Maharashtra, Odisha and MP; Woollens from HP, Uttaranchal and J&K; Honey, spices dry fruits etc. from different States; Tribal Jewellery from Himachal, Odisha, North-East, MP, Telangana; Pottery from Manipur, Rajasthan; Home Furnishing from Rajasthan, North East, MP, UP; Bags collection from Gujrat, Telangana, Jharkhand; and Grass Mat and Coir collection from West Bengal, Jharkhand and Kerala.
- **At the closing ceremony** of the National Tribal Festival, Hon'ble Tribal Affairs Minister Shri Jwal Oram felicitated tribal sportswoman - Ms. Mary Kom, for her extraordinary achievement of 6th time Women's World Boxing Champion at Dilli Haat on 30th November, 2018, who is also Brand Ambassador for TRIBES India (Punchtantra range of products) .
- **It has also been proposed** that National Tribal Festivals shall be conducted in 17 States/ Union territories up to March, 2019 to provide a broad platform to highlight tribal culture across India.

NGO GRANTS

- **Implementation** of Online application system "NGO Grants Online Application & Tracking System" (www.ngograntsmota.gov.in) activated for processing NGO proposals under the scheme of "Grant-in-aid to Voluntary Organizations working for welfare of Scheduled Tribes" has resulted in quicker information flow and smoother implementation of the scheme besides increasing the number of applications.
- **MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE FOR MINOR FOREST PRODUCE** The scheme for 'Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of Value Chain for MFP' (known as MSP for MFP in short) was launched in the year 2013-14 and it then covered only ten MFP items and was applicable to the Schedule V States only. Subsequently, in October 2016 the extent and coverage of the scheme was increased by adding more MFP items and also rendering the scheme applicable country wide. The MSP of ten items that were originally incorporated into the scheme were further revised in November 2017. The issues of further expanding the list of MFP items as also further revising the MSP of the existing MFP items are being considered by the Ministry.

JNPT becomes the only Indian port to be listed amongst the world's top 30 container ports

- **JNPT launched** their App service to facilitate better tracking and ease the trade process for their EXIM partners
- **The Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT)**, India's premiere container port got listed amongst the top 30 container ports globally, as per the latest Lloyds Report. JNPT notched up five spots, to be 28th on the list, compared to its previous ranking. This is a validation of all the efforts and strategic initiatives being implemented at JNPT in order to enhance overall port efficiency. Various new processes activated under the 'ease of doing business' initiative have not only helped in overall growth of the port business, but also allowed the EXIM trade to save time and cost which in turn have accentuated the growth story. Gaining operational efficiency is an on-going process and looking for solutions to better services so that the EXIM trade community benefits from it.
- **The JNPT also** launched their App service to facilitate better tracking of consignment and ease the trade process for their EXIM partners. The App will allow traders to access all the relevant information about their consignment and port related updates regarding traffic and weather, on their fingertips. The App will keep updating the relevant information at regular intervals, so that traders are abreast with the latest updates. The App will be available on Android and iOS. The app was launched by the Chairman, JNPT in presence of the stakeholders. The Chairman requested all stakeholders to use the app and share their feedback and recommendations regularly, so that the app can be upgraded as per the demand of the EXIM community.

10th Schedule of the Constitution

- **Background:** Mr. Khaira had resigned from the party on January 6, but did not resign as legislator. Later, he floated a new political outfit.
- **What is the anti-defection law?** The Tenth Schedule was inserted in the Constitution in 1985 by the 52nd Amendment Act. It lays down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer of a legislature based on a petition by any other member of the House.
- **The decision** on question as to disqualification on ground of defection is referred to the Chairman or the Speaker of such House, and his decision is final. The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies.
- **Disqualification: If a member of a house belonging to a political party:** Voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, or Votes, or does not vote in the legislature, contrary to the directions of his political party. However, if the member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified.
- **If an independent** candidate joins a political party after the election. If a nominated member joins a party six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.
- **Exceptions under the law:** Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances. The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger. In such a scenario, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.
- **Decision of the Presiding Officer is subject to judicial review:** The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review. This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1992, thereby allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer's decision in the High Court and Supreme Court. However, it held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order.

Triple-drug therapy for lymphatic filariasis

- **Triple drug therapy:** The World Health Organization (WHO) is recommending three drug treatment to accelerate the global elimination of lymphatic filariasis. The treatment, known as IDA, involves a combination of ivermectin, diethylcarbamazine citrate and albendazole. It is being recommended annually in settings where its use is expected to have the greatest impact.
- **The third drug** being used in this therapy will help control adult worms of lymphatic filariasis. Micro filariasis, which is produced by adult worms, is the cause of swollen leg. Previously the adult worms were sterilized by drugs and remained inactive for a year. Now that period will increase to two years.
- **The plan** is to administer these drugs for two consecutive years. The life of the adult worm is hardly four years, so it would die a natural death without causing any harm to the person.
- **Need for and significance of the therapy:** Lymphatic filariasis poses a grave threat to India. Over 40% of worldwide cases are found in India. Since 2004, two drug therapy for lymphatic filariasis has been in place but the addition of the third drug now will give a boost to the overall campaign.
- **India has missed** earlier deadlines to eradicate the disease by 2015 and 2017. The global deadline now is 2020 and the three drug approach may help the country get there.
- **Lymphatic filariasis:** Caused by infection with parasitic worms living in the lymphatic system. The larval stages of the parasite (microfilaria) circulate in the blood and are transmitted from person to person by mosquitoes.
- **Manifestation** of the disease after infection takes time and can result in an altered lymphatic system, causing abnormal enlargement of body parts, and leading to severe disability and social stigmatization of those affected.
- **The parasites** are transmitted by four main types of mosquitoes: Culex, Mansonia, Anopheles and Aedes.

Project ReWeave

- **Significance of the e-commerce platform:** Connect artisans to the buyers directly enabling them to expand to newer customers and markets.
- **Provide a platform** to showcase signature collections created by the weaver communities, showcase traditional designs and products created from natural dyes to a broad set of customers. Aid in weavers in increasing their income and earning a sustainable livelihood while also reviving traditional forgotten Indian art.
- **About Project ReWeave:** Initiated by Microsoft India (R&D) Pvt. Limited in 2016 as part of its Philanthropies efforts. Aim: To revive the handloom weaving ecosystem in India.
- **Features:** Under the initiative, Microsoft is working closely with NGO partner, Chaitanya Bharathi to provide infrastructure, financing and marketing support to help weaver families keep their weaving traditions alive by sustaining livelihoods.

National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

- **For the elderly poor,** disabled and widows pensions are to be increased from the current ₹200 to ₹800. For those above the age of 80, the proposal is to increase the pension from ₹500 to ₹1,200 a month.
- **What next?** The Ministry has submitted the proposal, which would have an additional annual cost implication of ₹18,000 crore, to the Finance Ministry to be considered for inclusion in the interim Budget to be presented on February 1.
- **About National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** The NSAP is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Ministry of Rural Development. It came into effect from 15th August, 1995. It represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the DPSP in Article 41 of the Constitution. In particular, Article 41 of the Constitution of India directs the State to provide public assistance to its citizens in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want within the limit of its economic capacity and development.

- **It aims to provide financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions.** Coverage: It currently covers more than three crore people who are below the poverty line (BPL), including about 80 lakh widows, 10 lakh disabled and 2.2 crore elderly.
- **Presently NSAP comprises of five schemes, namely:** Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS). Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS). Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS). National Family Benefit Scheme NFBS). Annapurna

Arab Economic and Social Development Summit

- **Significance of the declaration:** This is the first time Arab countries have reached a consensus on encouraging Syrian refugees to return to their country.
- **The declaration** said, the refugee crisis in Arab countries is the worst humanitarian problem since World War II. It points out that the crisis leads to an economic slowdown, increases the expenditure and deficit, imposes burdens on public sectors and infrastructure and poses risks to the society.
- **Arab Economic and Social Development summits:** They are summits of the Arab League, held at the head of state level to address issues of economic and social development among member-states.
- **What is Arab League?** The Arab League is a regional organization of Arab countries in and around North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Arabia.
- **It was formed in Cairo** on 22 March 1945 with six members: Kingdom of Egypt, Kingdom of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Currently, the League has 22 members, but Syria's participation has been suspended since November 2011, as a consequence of government repression during the Syrian Civil War.
- **The League's main goal** is to "draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries".

Groundwater 'time bomb' is ticking

- **What's the issue?** As per the findings by an international team of researchers, groundwater reserves are already under pressure as the global population explodes and crop production rises in lockstep. But the extreme weather events such as drought and record rainfall — both made worse by our heating planet — could have another long-lasting impact on how quickly reserves replenish.
- **Why is the crisis described as a time bomb?** Researchers found that only half of all groundwater supplies are likely to fully replenish or re-balance within the next 100 years — potentially leading to shortages in drier areas. This could be described as an environmental time bomb because any climate change impacts on recharge occurring now, will only fully impact the baseflow to rivers and wetlands a long time later.
- **The process** through which rainwater is filtered through bedrock and accumulated underground can take centuries and varies greatly by region. As climate change delivers longer droughts and bigger superstorms, the extremes of rainfall become more pronounced, impacting groundwater reserves for generations to come. In arid areas took far longer — several thousand years in some cases — to respond to alterations in climate than reserves in more humid parts.
- **Situation of groundwater in India:** Today, India is the largest user of the groundwater in the world with almost 90% being used for drinking water and almost 60-70% for irrigation. Current statistics also show that nearly 50% of urban water supply comes from groundwater. India is on the threshold of a very serious groundwater crisis, which needs mitigation both in the fields and at the policy corridors of the country.
- **The groundwater crisis is embedded at two different levels:** Groundwater exploitation of aquifers (where groundwater is stored) in different parts of the India and Groundwater contamination that find origins, both in geogenic source such as Arsenic and Fluoride along with anthropogenic sources of contamination primarily due to poor disposal of waste and wastewater.
- **Concern:** Water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, worsening hunger and malnutrition.
- **Need of the hour:** There is a need to modernise the regulatory framework for accessing groundwater soon after massive expansion in mechanical pumping led to the realisation that recharge could not keep pace with use.

Methanol-blending in petrol

- **Background:** The objective of the study was to evaluate emissions in real-world conditions as well as check the performance of the vehicles. The agency used 15% M-15 blend in vehicles and tested them for 3,000km. In auto rickshaws, the performance was similar, except for a marginal reduction in nitrogen oxides.
- **Methanol as an alternative fuel:** Methanol is a promising fuel as it is clean, cheaper than fossil fuels and a good substitute for heavy fuels. India imports methanol from Saudi Arabia and Iran at present. Across the world, methanol is emerging as a clean, sustainable transportation fuel of the future.
- **Why Methanol?** Methanol can be used as an energy producing fuel, transportation fuel and cooking fuel, cutting down India's oil import bill by an estimated 20% over the next few years. Unlike CNG, using methanol as a transportation fuel would require minimal alteration in the vehicles.
- **Methanol** is a clean-burning fuel that produces fewer smog-causing emissions — such as sulphur oxides (SOx), nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter — and can improve air quality and related human health issues.
- **Methanol** is most commonly produced on a commercial scale from natural gas. It can also be produced from renewable sources such as biomass and recycled carbon dioxide. As a high-octane vehicle fuel, methanol offers excellent acceleration and power. It also improves vehicle efficiency.
- **Methanol as an enduring solution to human energy needs?** Methanol has the potential to be an enduring solution to human energy needs is because the belched out CO₂ (greenhouse gas emission) both from using Methanol and while producing Methanol can be tapped back to produce Methanol. Thereby a seamless loop of CO₂ sequestration cycle is created to perpetually burn fuels without polluting the environment at all. CO₂ from steel plants, Thermal Power plants, Cement Plants etc. can be tapped in large quantities to produce Methanol.
- **Way ahead:** The Concept of "Methanol Economy" is being actively pursued by China, Italy, Sweden, Israel, US, Australia, Japan and many other European countries. 10% of fuel in China in transport Sector is Methanol. Methanol Economy, if adopted by India can be one of the best ways to mitigate the Environmental hazards of a growing economy. NITI Aayog is preparing a road map for a full-scale implementation in the near future.

Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2019:

- **Context:** The 15th annual Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) is being held in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Usually celebrated on or around 9th January, the grand scale of arrangements that went behind this year's celebrations pushed the event to January 21-23.
- **Chief Guest: The Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Jugnath.** Theme: "Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India".
- **The first chapter of Pravasi Bhartiya Divas** was held in 2003 to recognise the contributions of NRIs in academic and professional fields across the world.
- **The reason 9th January** is usually set aside for celebrating Pravasi Bhartiya Divas is that Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa on this day in 1915.
- **Significance:** These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and Indian communities in India for mutually beneficial activities. These conventions are also very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

Flamingo Festival at Pulicat lake:

- **About the festival:** Flamingo Festival is held every year to promote tourism in Pulicat and Nellapattu. Flamingo Festival is being organised for the past 12 years.
- **Facts for Prelims:** About Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary: It is considered one of the biggest habitat for some hundreds of pelicans and other birds. Located about 20 km north of the Pulicat Lake on the Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border, the sanctuary is spread in about 459 hectares.

- **About Pulicat lake:** It is the second largest brackish water lake or lagoon in India, after Chilika Lake. It straddles the border of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu states with over 96% of it in Andhra Pradesh. The lake encompasses the Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary. The barrier island of Sriharikota separates the lake from the Bay of Bengal and is home to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre. Two rivers which feed the lagoon are the Arani river at the southern tip and the Kalangi River from the northwest, in addition to some smaller streams. The Buckingham Canal, a navigation channel, is part of the lagoon on its western side.

World Capital of Architecture:

- **Context:** The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has announced that the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro will be the World Capital of Architecture for 2020.
- **Rio will be** the first city to receive the title under a program launched together by UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA) in November last year. The city will host the World Congress of UIA, in July 2020, an event that occurs every three years.
- **Significance:** According to UNESCO, the World Capital of Architecture is intended to become an international forum for debates about pressing global challenges from the perspectives of culture, cultural heritage, urban planning and architecture.

Arunachal govt declares Pakke Hornbill Fest as 'state festival':

- **Context:** The government of Arunachal Pradesh has declared the Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF)—the state's only conservation festival, as a "state festival".
- **About Great Indian Hornbill:** The great hornbill is long-lived, living for nearly 50 years in captivity. It is predominantly fruit eating, but is an opportunist and preys on small mammals, reptiles and birds. IUCN status: Vulnerable (uplisted from Near Threatened in 2018). It is also listed in Appendix I of CITES.



INTEGRATED SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (ISDS):

- **'Samarth'- Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector:** Union Minister of Textiles, SmritiZubinIrani, chaired a meeting of stakeholders on Samarth – Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector under the Skill India Mission in May, 2018 in New Delhi, to familiarize the stakeholders about the scheme and its guidelines. The broad objective of the new scheme is to skill the youth for gainful and sustainable employment in the textiles sector covering the entire value chain of textiles, excluding spinning and weaving.
- **The concerns of the stakeholders** and challenges faced by them during implementation of the previous scheme were discussed in the meeting. Feedback from the concerned stakeholders on how the scheme can contribute and benefit the textiles industry and boost skill development was also discussed.
- **The guidelines of the scheme** were released on 23rd of April 2018. The scheme was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on 20th of December 2017 with an outlay of Rs. 1300 crore. It is intended to provide demand driven, placement oriented National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant skilling programmes to incentivize and supplement the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the textiles sector. The scheme targets to train 10 lakh persons (9 lakh in organised and 1 lakh in traditional sector) over a period of 3 years (2017-20).
- **The Integrated Skill Development Scheme (ISDS)** was introduced by the Ministry of Textiles as a pilot scheme in the last two years of XI Five Year Plan (FYP) with an outlay of Rs. 272 crore, including Rs. 229 crore as Government contribution with a physical target to train 2.56 lakh persons. The scheme was scaled up as main phase during the XIIth FYP with an allocation of Rs. 1,900 crore to train 15 lakh persons.
- **The ISDS addresses** the critical gap of skilled manpower in textile industry through industry-oriented training programmes. It is implemented through three components where major thrust is given to PPP mode where a partnership has been developed with the industry in establishing a demand-driven skilling ecosystem. The scheme has been largely aligned with the common norms of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.

Skill Development in Textiles sector

- **Total 11,14,545 persons** were trained under the scheme mainly in apparel and garmenting (86%) with total expenditure of Rs. 935.17 crore, of which 8,43,082 persons (75.64%) were given employment in the textile sector. Out of the persons trained in last 4 years, more than 70% were women, 22.69% were from SC category and 7.22% were from ST Category.
- **Making a Difference Through Skilling:** Textiles sectors employs over 45 million people. Additional requirement of about 17 million by the year 2022. In the last four years 8.58 lakh persons trained in partnership with 58 Government and industry partners. The Samarth guidelines have been issued on 23.04.2018 and RFP for empanelment of Implementing Partners has been floated on 21.05.2018.

Article 35A and related issues

- **'In-chamber'** decision refers to a process of decision making where the orders are issued from the Justice's chambers without a formal court proceeding.
- **Background:** In August last year, the top court adjourned hearing on a batch of petitions challenging Article 35A till January this year, after taking note of submissions of the Centre and the state government that there was a law and order problem in the state.
- **What's the issue?** A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court which says Article 35A was against the "very spirit of oneness of India" as it created a "class within a class of Indian citizens". It said restricting citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property within Jammu and Kashmir is a violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Indian Constitution.

- **What is Article 35A?** Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Constitution giving the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature a carte blanche to decide who all are 'permanent residents' of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare.
- **The provision mandates** that no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.
- **How did it come about?** Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of the then President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- **The controversial Constitution** (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of 1954 followed the 1952 Delhi Agreement entered into between Nehru and the then Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah, which extended Indian citizenship to the 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **The Presidential Order** was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain "exceptions and modifications" to the Constitution for the benefit of 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **So, Article 35A** was added to the Constitution as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded to the 'permanent residents' of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Critical side of Article 35A:** How Article 35A is against the "very spirit of oneness of India" as it creates a "class within a class of Indian citizens"?
- **It treats non-permanent** residents of J&K as 'second-class' citizens. Non-permanent residents of J&K are not eligible for employment under the State government and are also debarred from contesting elections. Meritorious students are denied scholarships and they cannot even seek redress in any court of law.
- **Further, the issues of refugees** who migrated to J&K during Partition are still not treated as 'State subjects' under the J&K Constitution. It was inserted unconstitutionally, bypassing Article 368 which empowers only Parliament to amend the Constitution.
- **The laws enacted in pursuance** of Article 35A are ultra vires of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution, especially, and not limited to, Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (protection of life).
- **Way ahead:** This matter requires the active participation of all stakeholders. It is necessary to give confidence to the residents of J&K that any alteration in status quo will not take away their rights but will boost J&K's prosperity as it will open doors for more investment, resulting in new opportunities. Article 35A, which was incorporated about six decades ago, now requires a relook, especially given that J&K is now a well-established democratic State.

Mekedatu project

- **What next?** Now, the DPR will be placed before the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) and after its approval, will be brought before the Advisory Committee of the Union Ministry of Water Resources.
- **The DPR will** be examined in specialised directorates of CWC including the Inter-State Matters Directorate, and if found acceptable, will be submitted to the Advisory Committee of Irrigation and Multipurpose Projects of the Ministry of Water Resources, for acceptance.
- **On the basis of the note** prepared by CWC and deliberations during the meeting of the Advisory Committee, a decision on acceptance of the project will be taken.
- **Why is Tamil Nadu opposing?** Tamil Nadu has been vehemently opposing the project and the CWC's decision to grant permission for Karnataka to prepare the DPR.
- **Arguments of TN:** Proposed reservoir violates the decisions of the Supreme Court and the Cauvery Tribunal. The Supreme Court had noted that the existing storage in the Cauvery basin of Karnataka should be taken into account for ensuring water releases to Tamil Nadu during the period of June to January.
- **The centre says** that the DPR submitted by Karnataka was subject to the amicable resolution of connected inter-State matters. However, Kerala, referring to the Guidelines of Submission, Appraisal and Acceptance of Irrigation and Multipurpose Project of 2017, argued that inter-State aspects had to be dealt with even at the stage of preparing the pre-feasibility report on the project.
- **About Mekedatu dam project:** Being set up by the Karnataka government, the project is near Mekedatu, in Ramanagaram district, across the river Cauvery from Tamil Nadu. Its primary objective is to supply drinking water to Bengaluru and recharge the groundwater table in the region.
- **About CWC:** Presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.

- **Entrusted with the general** responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development.
- **Headed by a Chairman**, with the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India.

Facts for Prelims- Cauvery River:

- **River rises on Brahmagiri Hill** of the Western Ghats in south-western Karnataka state. It flows in a south-easterly direction for 475 miles through the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Before emptying into the Bay of Bengal south of Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu, the river breaks into a large number of distributaries.
- **In the upper course**, at the Krishnaraja Sagara, the Kaveri is joined by two tributaries, the Hemavati and Lakshmantirtha, where a dam was constructed for irrigation.
- **Upon entering Tamil Nadu**, the Kaveri continues through a series of twisted wild gorges until it reaches Hogenakal Falls. There the Mettur Dam was constructed for irrigation and hydel power. The Kaveri's main tributaries are the Kabani (Kabbani), Amaravati, Noyil, and Bhavani rivers.

'Size India' project

- **CMAI will conduct a study across India to arrive at standard sizes.** About 'Size India' project: The 'Size India' project will help create a India-specific size chart for the textiles and garment industry.
- **Aim: To arrive at standard Indian sizes for apparels.** Significance: The project will reduce overall prices and the consumers will stand to benefit from it.
- **Details of the project:** Under the project, anthropometric data will be collected from 25,000 sample (with men and women in equal numbers) population in age group 15 to 65 years across six major cities.
- **It will create database** of measurements that will result in standardized size chart which is representative of Indian population and can be adopted by apparel industry.
- **Why have standard size?** Apparel retail is one of the important drivers of modern retail in India, with its total size estimated to be \$72 billion. Developed countries such as the U.S. and U.K. have standard sizes for apparels. Having standard sizes will reassure customers when they purchase a product, both online and at outlets, and will reduce wastages for the apparel manufacturers.
- **At present, large percentage** of population face difficulty in finding clothes that fit them perfectly according to their body measurements. This is mainly due to differences in anthropometric built of people in different geographical regions across the country.

Debt-to-GDP ratio of Centre and states

- **Key findings:** The Centre's total debt as a percentage of GDP reduced to 46.5% in 2017-18 from 47.5% as of March 31, 2014. The total debt of the States has risen to 24% in 2017-18, and is estimated to be 24.3% in 2018-19.
- **In absolute terms**, the Centre's total debt increased from ₹56,69,429 crore at the end of March 2014 to ₹82,35,178 crore in 2017-18, representing a 45% increase. The total debt of the States increased from ₹24,71,270 crore to ₹40,22,090 crore over the same period, an increase of almost 63%.
- **Key takeaways:** While the Centre is moving in the right direction in terms of meeting the N.K. Singh Committee recommendations on public debt, the States are moving in the opposite direction.

- **Outstanding liabilities** of States have increased sharply during 2015-16 and 2016-17, following the issuance of UDAY bonds in these two years. The increase in the debt stock at the State level is worrying because they don't have the wherewithal to service the debt if it goes beyond a certain point. They could then start getting into a debt trap situation.
- **Recommendations by N.K. Singh committee:** The N.K. Singh-headed FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) Review Committee report had recommended the ratio to be 40% for the Centre and 20% for the States, respectively, by 2023.
- **It said that the 60% consolidated** Central and State debt limit was consistent with international best practices, and was an essential parameter to attract a better rating from the credit ratings agencies.
- **Way ahead for states:** The States do have some fiscal space to reduce their borrowing in the coming years due to the large cash surpluses they hold. This indicates scope for reducing the quantum of market borrowings by State governments in case they bring down their cash surpluses (parked as investment in treasury bills of the Central government).
- **State governments** as a group have exhibited a tendency to hold large cash surpluses/investments in Cash Balance Investment Account on a consistent basis while at the same time resorting to market borrowings to finance their GFD (Gross Fiscal Deficit).

ILO Commission's Future of Work Report

- **Concerns and challenges highlighted by the report:** Due to the unprecedented transformational change in the world of work, there are several transformational challenges that are bound to occur. Artificial intelligence, automation and robotics will lead to job losses, as skills become obsolete.
- **Among the 10 recommendations are:** A universal labour guarantee that protects fundamental workers' rights, an adequate living wage, limits on hours of work and safe and healthy workplaces.
- **Guaranteed social protection** from birth to old age that supports people's needs over the life cycle. A universal entitlement to lifelong learning that enables people to skill, reskill and upskill.
- **Managing technological** change to boost decent work, including an international governance system for digital labour platforms. Greater investments in the care, green and rural economies. A transformative and measurable agenda for gender equality. Reshaping business incentives to encourage long-term investments.
- **Need of the hour:** It is time for a vision for a human-centred agenda that is based on investing in people's capabilities, institutions of work and in decent and sustainable work.
- **Countless opportunities** lie ahead to improve the quality of working lives, expand choice, close the gender gap, reverse the damages wreaked by global inequality. Yet none of this will happen by itself.
- **Governments, trade unions** and employers need to work together, to make economies and labour markets more inclusive. Such a social dialogue can help make globalization work for everyone.
- **About Global Commission on Future of Work:** The formation of a ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work marks the second stage in the ILO Future of Work Initiative.
- **Its job is to undertake** an in-depth examination of the future of work that can provide the analytical basis for the delivery of social justice in the 21st century.
- **Its job also includes** identifying the key challenges facing the world of work and making practical recommendations about how these may be addressed in the future.

Arrow 3 interceptor system:

- **What is it?** Arrow 3 interceptor system was recently successfully tested.

- **Features:** Arrow 3 is intended to serve as Israel's highest-altitude missile interception system. It is jointly funded, developed and produced by Israel and the United States. The system is designed to shoot down missiles above the atmosphere.
- **Israel's Arrow** system, partly financed by the United States, was developed and produced by Israeli Aerospace Industries in partnership with Boeing.
- **Concern:** Arrow 3 may serve as an anti-satellite weapon, which would make Israel one of the world's few countries capable of shooting down satellites.

Global Talent Competitive Index 2019:

- **Context: Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) for 2019 has been released.** GTCI, launched in 2013, is an annual benchmarking report that measures the ability of countries to compete for talent.
- **It is released** by INSEAD business school in partnership with Tata Communications and Adecco Group.
- **The report measures** levels of Global Talent Competitiveness by looking at 68 variables such as ease of hiring, gender earnings gap, and prevalence of training in firms.
- **India's performance:** Ranked at 80. India's biggest challenge is to improve its ability to attract and retain talent.
- **There is a need** to address its poor level of Internal Openness in particular with respect to weak gender equality and low tolerances towards minorities and immigrants.
- **Global performance:** Switzerland followed by Singapore, the US, Norway and Denmark were in the top five on the list.
- **China emerged** as the best performer among the BRICS countries, with an overall position of 45th. Note: The topics on INF treaty, CRZ rules and River linking will be covered tomorrow.



Shri Dharmendra Pradhan launches new reforms, guidelines to strengthen Jan Shikshan Santhans (JSS)

- **Empowers JSS** through new guidelines aligning them to National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF)
- **Launch of a portal** with phase 1 functionality aggregating overall ecosystem database Pilot launch of Blended Training System, a comprehensive ICT -based platform that provides numerous benefits for trainees and trainers
- **In a bid to boost** skill training and entrepreneurship in the remotest corners of the country, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Petroleum and Natural Gas (MSDE) announced comprehensive reforms for Jan ShikshanSansthan (JSS), to further strengthen the skills ecosystem benefiting those in the underprivileged sections of society. The announcements were made today during the National Conference for Jan ShikshanSansthan (JSSs) which was held here today. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, said "The emergence of the rural industry as an important growth engine for the economy makes it an imperative for us to stress on skilling our youth in remote districts of the country. JSSs can play an important role in bridging information asymmetry between skill training and market opportunities thereby giving an impetus to the creation of a workforce equipped in technology-driven skills, including in areas like health & wellness, tourism, e-commerce, retail and trade. JSS guidelines have been reformed keeping in mind the diverse stakeholders engaged in running these institutions, and will bring in greater flexibility, transparency and uniformity."
- **Formerly under the Ministry** of Human Resources Development, Jan ShikshanSansthan has been transferred to the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship in 2018. Today's conference saw the release of new guidelines, aligning the JSSs to the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF). This marks an important step towards the convergence of all skilling activities under the aegis of one ministry, bringing in transparency and accountability to the entire skilling ecosystem.

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

- **The Youth** which represents the most vibrant and dynamic segment of the population has been given a new hope through Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK) of the Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports during the year. Series of initiatives taken by the Deptt. of Youth Affairs have resulted in greater participation of youth in the Nation Building.
- **Restructuring of the Schemes of the Department of Youth Affairs** The Schemes of the Department have been consolidated and restructured into 3 compact schemes, w.e.f. 01.04.2016, as follows: 1. Eight Schemes are merged into a new 'umbrella' Scheme called "Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK)". 2. National Service Scheme (NSS) 3. Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) The major achievements under the above Schemes/ Sub-Schemes during 2018-19 are given below.
- **Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK)** A. Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS): NYKS, with about 36.22 lakh youth enrolled through 1.68 lakh youth clubs, has been working all over the Country to develop the personality of the youth and to engage them in nation-building activities.
- **Some significant initiatives/ achievements of NYKS during the year are as follows:** 8.47 lakh saplings were planted by NYKS volunteers.
- **13,432 units of blood was donated by NYKS volunteers.** 1,764 education in basic vocations and soft skills programmes were organised, involving 51,508 youth.
- **1694 Youth Club Development Programmes were organised, involving 83,514 youth.** 1336 Sports Meets at Block level were organised, involving 1,77,688 youth.
- **8126 Programmes were held to celebrate days of national and international significance, involving 11,05,136 youth.** 230 District Youth Conventions were organised, involving 1,84,5024 youth.
- **International Day of Yoga** on 21st June 2018 was observed by NYKS at 38,356 locations across India by involving 23.68 lakh youth.

- **Swachhta Programme was conducted** at 1,15,437 locations involving 12,07,686 youth for cleaning of 8,577 Schools / colleges, 7,797 Hospitals and 21,905 statues.
- **Water Conservation** - 13,757 awareness creation programmes were conducted by involving 3.9 lakh youth; 2430 new water bodies were created and 3437 water sources were maintained.
- **Inderdhanush Programme** - in which 59,961 children were immunized with the help of service providers.
- **National Unity Day and Run** for Unity Programme was conducted by district Nehru Yuva Kendras in India wherein 2.6 lakh youth were involved.
- **Swachta Hi Sewa Campaign** in East Champaran - Swachta Hi Sewa Campaign was launched by district Nehru Yuva Kendra, East Champaran (Bihar) from 14th September to 25th September, 2018 in which more than 300 youth participated. Different types of activities such as Cleaning of Moti Jheel, Cleanliness drive to clean streets, Railway Station and common places.
- **Clean Ganga - NYKS** is working with National Mission for Clean Ganga to spread awareness for cleanliness & sanitation in villages along Ganga River. Ganga Vriksharopan Saptah (Plantation Week) was carried out in 53 selected blocks of 4 States of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. 82,819 saplings were planted in collaboration with Forest Department and National Mission for Clean Ganga from 9th July to 15th July 2018.
- **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat** is being organized Inter State Youth Exchange Programme in 15 pairing States. So far, 4 such programmes have been completed in the states of Telangana, Punjab, Kerala and Chhattisgarh in which 401 youth from pairing States participated.
- **Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyan Programme** - NYKS was the major partner for implementation of Poshan Abhiyan programme across the country. Different types of activities such as Gosthi, seminars and Discussions, Lectures by Eminent Resource Persons on Focus Areas of Poshan Maah viz. pregnancy care, right age of marriage, child care, birth spacing, immunization, breast feeding upto 2yrs and complimentary feeding and Maintenance and adequate sanitation facilities in the village, etc were organized. Besides these, Door to door campaigning in the village focusing on Focus Areas of Poshan Maah, Rallies, Run, Padyatra, Cycle Yatra were organized. The efforts of Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports and NYKS were appreciated at the highest level. Ministry of Women and Child Welfare awarded for the exemplary work.
- **Parakram Parv, 2018 – NYKS** has organised various programmes and activities and participated in events to mark the Second Anniversary of Surgical Strikes during 28th September 2018 to 30th September 2018, organised by the Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India in various locations across the country. More than 1786 youth & officials of NYKS participated in the programme & activities across the country.
- **Health Mela- With the support** of Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Heart Care Foundation organised 25th Perfect Health Mela on 23rd October, 2018 in Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi. In this programme, 1000 youth from NYKs participated. Well known Artists, Specialists, Doctors and Social Workers were also present.

National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD):

- **National Programme for Youth** and Adolescent Development (NPYAD) along with other Schemes of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has been merged into one 'Umbrella Scheme' called Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakarm (RYSK) for providing support to Government/ non-Government organisations for undertaking activities for development of adolescent and youth.
- **During financial year 2018-19**, financial assistance has been given to 5 Voluntary Organisations including All India Level Organisations. Youth Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas will be held on 21st January, 2019 at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
- **The 6th North East Youth Festival** was organized at Agartala, Tripura from 15th to 18th November, 2017. This Year Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award 2017 was conferred to 10 (Ten) Awardees for adventure in Land, Water, Air and Life time Achievements.

National Service Scheme (NSS):

- **NSS, with about 4.13 million** student youth enrolled in 42958 NSS units spread over through 451 Universities/ +2 Councils, 17996 Colleges/Technical Institutions and 12,827 Senior Secondary Schools across the country, has been working for development of personality and character of youth through voluntary community service. Some significant initiatives/ achievements of NSS during the year are as follows:

- **NSS has been restructured** as a Central Sector Scheme w.e.f. 1.4.2016. The Scheme is now a Central Sector Scheme.
- **NSS Volunteers have been actively** participating in Swachh Bharat Mission activities across the country. During the Swachh Bharat Pakhwada observed by the NSS Volunteers, they cleaned 2276 Hospital, 1713 Dispensary, 1665 Community Centres, 534 Old Age Homes, 554 Historical Places, 236 Orphanages, 263 Centres for Disabled, 748 Railway Stations, 3660 Bus Stops, 1339 Statues and 801 Archeological Sites and Tourist Places. Film making and Essay Competition was organized by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in collaboration with Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for NSS Volunteers.
- **Approximately 27000 NSS volunteers** participated in 100 Hours Swachh Bharat Summer Internship Programme Organized by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation. On the occasion of International Day of Yoga (21.06.2018), about 25.78 lakh NSS Volunteers participated in various yoga programmes across the country.
- **18,79,675 saplings were planted by NSS volunteers.** 1,91,581 units of blood was donated by NSS volunteers.
- **9402 health/eye/immunization camps were organised, in which 464622 NSS Volunteers participated.** 38,710 Awareness programmes/rallies were organised on issues of relevance to the community, in which 25.89 lakh NSS Volunteers participated.
- **62.50 lakh volunteer-hours of Shramadaan was undertaken by NSS volunteers during the year.** 34,728 NSS Volunteers were imparted Training on Self-Defence.
- **Awareness on GST** and Digital payments were organized by NSS Units throughout the country.

Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD):

- **During the period,** 162training/capacity building/ workshop, conference and other programmes were organized involving 6,663participants including NSS Officers, NYKS Officials, Faculty/ Teachers, Officials from State Govt. industries department & executives from NGOs etc.
- **Out of the above programmes,** 35ToTprogrammes were organized through which 1023 functionaries of NYKS and other officials of NSS were trained on themes such as Environment Education, Employability Skills, youth health, peace building, ICT based entrepreneurship for young rural women, education policies and programmes, life skills etc.
- **Youth Development Index:** RGNIYD recently brought out the India Youth Development Index and Report - 2017 as part of its documentation activity of the National Youth Resource Centre.

National Girl Child Day (NGCD)

- **What? National Girl Child Day (NGCD)** was observed on 24th January with objectives of generating awareness on the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and create a positive environment around valuing the girl child. The programme also observed anniversary of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme. National Girl Child Day was first initiated in 2008. Theme: "Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow".
- **Objectives:** To increase the consciousness of the people and offer new opportunities to the girl child in the society. To remove all the inequalities faced by the girl child. To ensure that the girl child should get all their human rights, respect and value in the country. To work regarding gender discrimination, to educate people.
- **About BBBP:** Launch and expansion: Launched in January, 2015 at Panipat in Haryana. All India Expansion of BBBP covering all 640 districts (as per Census 2011) was launched at Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan on 8th March 2018.
- **It is a tri-ministerial** effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development. It is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% financial assistance for District level component and the fund are directly released to the DC/DM's account for smooth operation of the Scheme.
- **Main Objective of the scheme** is to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum. The specific objectives of the scheme include preventing gender biased sex selective elimination; ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child.

- **Implementation:** At the Central level, Ministry of Women and Child Development is the nodal ministry for the programme and National Task Force headed by Secretary, MWCD with the representation of Partner Ministry and other nominated members
- **At the State level,** Chief Secretaries heads the State Task Force (STF) with representation of Department of WCD, Health and Education to monitor the implementation of the scheme.
- **The District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners (DCs)** lead and coordinate action of all departments for implementation of BBBP at the District level.

Cabinet decides to strengthen northeast autonomous councils

- **What are Autonomous District Council?** As per the Sixth Schedule, the four states viz. Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram contain the Tribal Areas which are technically different from the Scheduled Areas.
- **Though these areas fall** within the executive authority of the state, provision has been made for the creation of the District Councils and regional councils for the exercise of the certain legislative and judicial powers. Each district is an autonomous district and Governor can modify / divide the boundaries of the said Tribal areas by notification.
- **What do the new amendments seek to modify?** The amendment would impact a population of about 1 crore tribals living in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The Finance Commission would be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to the councils. Till now, the autonomous councils have depended on grants from Central Ministries and the State governments for specific projects.
- **As per the proposed amendment,** at least one third of the seats would be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.
- **The amendment also provides** for transfer of additional 30 subjects, including the departments of Public Works, Forests, Public Health Engineering, Health and Family Welfare, Urban Development and Food and Civil Supply to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council in Assam.
- **The proposed amendments** provide for elected village municipal councils, ensuring democracy at the grass-roots level. The State Election Commissions would hold elections to the autonomous councils, village and municipal councils in the areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.

National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)

- **Key facts:** It shall be situated at New Delhi. Composition: Presided over by its President and shall consist of one Technical Member (Centre) and one Technical Member (State). It is the forum of second appeal in GST laws and the first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States.
- **The appeals against the orders** in first appeals issued by the Appellate Authorities under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the GST Appellate Tribunal, which is common under the Central as well as State GST Acts.
- **Legal provisions:** CGST Act provides for the Appeal and Review Mechanism for dispute resolution under the GST Regime. The Act empowers the Central Government to constitute, on the recommendation of Council, by notification, with effect from such date as may be specified therein, an Appellate Tribunal known as the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority or the Revisional Authority.
- **Significance:** Being a common forum, GST Appellate Tribunal will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in implementation of GST across the country.

WHO's list of 10 Global health threats

- **Here are the 10 health issues that demand urgent attention from WHO and partners in 2019.** Air pollution and climate change. Non-communicable diseases. Global influenza pandemic.
- **Fragile and vulnerable settings:** More than 22% of the world population lives in places where protracted crisis (through a combination of challenges such as drought, famine, conflict and population displacement) and weak health services leave people without access to basic care. Antimicrobial resistance.
- **Ebola and other high-threat pathogens.** Weak primary health care. Vaccine hesitancy: Vaccination is one of the most cost-effective ways of avoiding disease, however, the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines, threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases. Dengue HIV
- **Steps to address them:** WHO's new 5-year strategic plan, the 13th General Programme of Work, aims to address these and other threats. Its plan focuses on a triple billion target that includes ensuring 1 billion more people benefit from access to universal health coverage, 1 billion more people being protected from health emergencies and 1 billion more people enjoy better health and well-being.

Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana

- **Key Highlights:** Under the scheme, a group of Indian diaspora will be taken on a government-sponsored tour of religious places in India twice a year. The group will be taken to the religious places of all major religions in India. The tour would be completely government sponsored.
- **Under the eligibility criteria,** all people of Indian-origin, aged between 45 and 65 can apply and a group will be selected out of them. The first preference will be given to people from 'Girmitiya countries' such as Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.
- **Who are Girmitiyas?** Girmitiyas or Jahajis are descendants of indentured Indian labourers brought to Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, East Africa, the Malay Peninsula, Caribbean and South America (Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname) to work on sugarcane plantations for the prosperity of the European settlers and save the Fijians from having to work on these plantations and thus to preserve their culture.
- **The term Girmitiya** was coined by Mahatma Gandhi who referred to himself as first Girmitiya. The countries where these indentured Indian labourers settled are known as Girmitiya countries.

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

- **What's the issue?** US in early December announced that it would suspend its obligations under the INF treaty by Feb. 2, citing Russian "cheating," unless Moscow comes into compliance with the terms of the pact. The U.S. government says the new Russian missile violates provisions of the pact that ban production, testing and deployment of land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 310 to 3,400 miles.
- **What would happen in the absence of treaty?** It is unclear what INF-prohibited systems the United States could deploy to Europe or Asia in the near term. The U.S. military has not developed any land-based missiles within the prohibited ranges for decades and has only just started funding a new ground-launched cruise missile to match the 9M729.
- **Moscow is in a very different position** and could rapidly expand deployment. The number of operational 9M729 missiles has been quite limited, but released from its official obligations under the treaty, Moscow could deploy more units rapidly.
- **Russia could also effectively** reclassify the RS-26 Rubezh, an experimental system that has been tested just above the INF Treaty's 5,500-kilometer limit. To avoid violating the INF, Russian officials previously described the RS-26 as an intercontinental ballistic missile. However, it could form the basis for a missile of a slightly shorter range if Moscow wished to boost its INF forces — without counting it under the U.S.-Russian New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, governing longer-range systems.
- **This move is also likely** to undermine the 2010 New START treaty governing U.S. and Russian long-range nuclear systems. The INF Treaty's demise will undercut New START by reopening questions on the relationship between intermediate and strategic systems that have been resolved for 30 years by the elimination of ground-based, intermediate-range missiles.
- **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty:** The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty, formally Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles) is a 1987 arms control agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union.

- **Under the INF Treaty**, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. agreed to eliminate within three years all ground-launched-missiles of 500-5,500 km range and not to develop, produce or deploy these in future. The U.S. destroyed 846 Pershing IIs and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) and the U.S.S.R., 1,846 missiles (SS-4s, SS-5s and SS-20s), along with its support facilities.
- **Importance of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in U.S.-Russia relations:** Under the Treaty, the two parties agreed that a whole important class of nuclear weapons would be removed from Europe, and only tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) or short-range missiles mostly deployed on the territory of Germany would remain.
- **The INF Treaty for years** served to mitigate fears of both parties in relation to possibility of military escalation, operational miscalculation, and helping to shift the logic of MAD [mutually assured destruction] to the higher "more sensitive" political level.

CRZ Regulations

- **The new CRZ norms** have been issued under Section 3 of the Environment Protection Act, 1986. The new CRZ norms aim to promote sustainable development based on scientific principles.
- **Objective of CRZ Regulations 2019:** To promote sustainable development based on scientific principles taking into account the natural hazards such as increasing sea levels due to global warming. To conserve and protect the environment of coastal stretches and marine areas, besides livelihood security to the fisher communities and other local communities in the coastal area.
- **Salient Features of CRZ Regulations 2019:** Two separate categories for CRZ-III (Rural) areas: CRZ-III A: The A category of CRZ-III areas are densely populated rural areas with a population density of 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas have a No Development Zone (NDZ) of 50 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL) as against 200 meters from the High Tide Line stipulated in the CRZ Notification, 2011.
- **CRZ-III B** – The B category of CRZ-III rural areas have population density of below 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas have a No Development Zone of 200 meters from the HTL.
- **Floor Space Index Norms eased:** As per CRZ, 2011 Notification, the Floor Space Index (FSI) or the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) had been frozen. As per the latest notification, the government has decided to de-freeze the Floor Space Index and permit FSI for construction projects.
- **Tourism infrastructure permitted** in coastal areas: The new norms permit temporary tourism facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks, change rooms, drinking water facilities, etc. in Beaches.
- **Streamlining of CRZ Clearances:** The procedure for CRZ clearances has been streamlined. Now, the only such projects which are located in the CRZ-I (Ecologically Sensitive Areas) and CRZ IV (area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 Nautical Miles seaward) will be dealt with for CRZ clearance by the Ministry. The powers for clearances with respect to CRZ-II and III have been delegated at the State level.
- **No Development Zone of 20 meters** for all Islands: For islands close to the main land coast and for all Backwater Islands in the main land, No Development Zone of 20 meters has been stipulated in wake of space limitations and unique geography of such regions.
- **Pollution abatement:** To address pollution in Coastal areas, the treatment facilities have been made permissible in CRZ-I B area subject to necessary safeguards.
- **Critically Vulnerable Coastal Areas (CVCA):** Sundarban region of West Bengal and other ecologically sensitive areas identified as under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 such as Gulf of Khambat and Gulf of Kutchh in Gujarat, Achra-Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, Karwar and Coondapur in Karnataka, Vembanad in Kerala, Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu, Bhaitarkanika in Odisha and Krishna in Andhra Pradesh are treated as Critical Vulnerable Coastal Areas. These Critical Vulnerable Coastal Areas will be managed with the involvement of coastal communities including fisher folk.

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar:

- **What? Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar**, an annual award, has been instituted by the government. The award is to be announced every year on 23rd January on the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- **Eligibility: All Indian Citizens** and organizations, who have excelled in areas of Disaster Management; like Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Rescue, Response, Relief, Rehabilitation, Research/ Innovations or Early Warning are eligible for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar.

- **2019 awardee:** For the year 2019, 8th Battalion of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) located at Ghaziabad has been selected for its commendable work in Disaster Management. The Award recipient will receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh.

“Sea Vigil”:

- **What is it?** It is the first coastal defence Exercise, conducted by the Navy and Coast Guard, in close coordination with State Governments and Union Territories. It was the largest such exercise the country had ever witnessed in recent times and saw participation by more than 100 ships, aircraft and patrol boats manned and operated by various security agencies.
- **Aim:** To comprehensively and holistically validate the efficacy of the measures taken since '26/11'.
- **International forum** for advancing global collaboration in Homoeopathy: Context: The World Integrated Medicine Forum on the regulation of Homoeopathic Medicinal Products is being held in India.
- **Theme:** ‘Advancing Global Collaboration’. Organised by Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH), with the support of Ministry of AYUSH and many others.
- **Significance:** The Forum will be serving as the only truly global platform in which the public and private sector can meet and exchange ideas on how to ensure and increase the availability of safe and effective homeopathic medicines worldwide, now for the second time. The first forum on similar lines was organised by CCRH in 2017.

About Aadi Mahotsav:

- **Organized by Ministry of Tribal affairs and TRIFED.** The Mahotsav will comprise of display and sale of items of tribal art and craft, tribal medicine & healers, tribal cuisine and display of tribal folk performance, in which tribal artisans, chefs, folk dancers/musicians from 23 States of the country shall participate and provide glimpse of their rich traditional culture.
- **The festival will** feature exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, art, paintings, fabric, jewellery and much more.
- **Significance of the event:** As the name of this event Aadi Mahotsav suggests, it is its ‘Adi’ factor that is important about them. The Adivasi way of life is guided by primal truths, eternal values and a natural simplicity. The greatness of the tribes lies in this that they have managed to retain the primal skills and natural simplicity. This quality gives their arts and crafts a timeless appeal. The crudest tribal handicraft instantly touches a primal instinct in all of us. This is particularly true in tribal music and dance.

Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT):

- **As per the latest Lloyds Report,** JNPT becomes the only Indian port to be listed amongst the world's top 30 container ports. It is ranked at 28th position.
- **Keerian – Gandial bridge:** Context: Keerian – Gandial bridge, over river Ravi, was recently inaugurated. The bridge over Ravi at Keerian – Gandial will benefit over 2,20,000 people living on the two sides – Kathua in Jammu, and Pathankot in Punjab. It will reduce the distance between the two cities from 45 kms to 8.6 kms. The Keerian – Gandial bridge will improve inter-state connectivity.
- **Rashtriya Bal Puraskar:** Context: Rashtriya Bal Puraskar was recently awarded to 26 awardees by the President.
- **About Rashtriya Bal Puraskar:** The earlier national awards for children have been revamped as Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar. An additional component of bravery has also been added.

- **Categories:** Bal Shakti Puraskar: The Bal Shakti Puraskar is given in the fields of Innovation, Social Service, Scholastic, Sports, Art & Culture, and Bravery. The award carries a medal, a cash prize of Rs 100000, book vouchers worth Rs. 10,000, a certificate and a citation.
- **Bal Kalyan Puraskar:** The Bal Kalyan Puraskar is given in the categories of Individual and Institution. The award for Individual category consists of a cash prize of Rs 100000, a medal, a citation and a certificate. The award for Institution category consists of a prize of Rs 500000 each, a medal, a citation and a certificate.

Edelman Trust Barometer report:

- **Context:** The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer report has been released by the Edelman Intelligence.
- **The Edelman Trust Barometer** report is an international study based on the opinions of elites that focuses on the principles of trust in business, government, media and NGOs. Based on the findings the report calculates the Global Trust Index.
- **The key findings from the report are:** The Global Trust Index witnessed a marginal increase of 3 points to 52. The index has been topped by China in both the informed public and the general population segments, with scores of 79 and 88 respectively.
- **Trust in companies:** Companies headquartered in Switzerland, Germany and Canada were the most trusted ones. Companies headquartered in India, Mexico and Brazil are the least trusted, followed by China and South Korea.
- **India's performance:** India is among the most trusted nations globally when it comes to government, business, NGOs and media but the country's brands are among the least-trusted. India stood at the second place in the informed public category and third place in the general population category.



2018 Year End Review: Ministry of I&B

- **The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** is one of the vital Ministries that represent the face of the government in reaching out to the masses. The Ministry is entrusted with the task of disseminating information about government policies, schemes and programmes through the different mediums of communication.
- **The Ministry took** several key initiatives in the year 2018 to meet these objectives, a snapshot of which is presented below. Information Sector Bureau of Outreach and Communication formed through integration of Directorate of Advertising & Visual Publicity (DAVP), Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP) and Song & Drama Division (S&DD) for ensuring synergy between the media units which were otherwise working in silos.
- **Reference Annual India 2018** and भारत 2018 released - the flagship publications brought out by Publications Division. The two Reference Annuals were also made available as e-book in the most commonly used e-PUB format so that they could be easily accessed on a variety of devices such as tablets, computers, e-readers and smartphones. Reconstitution of Committee on Journalist Welfare Scheme - for the first time, journalists were also made members of the Committee. It was also made leaner with only Secretary (I&B), Joint Secretary (P&A), Principal Director General, PIB as official members.
- **DeenDayalUpadhyay Scholarship** announced for people of Indian Origin who have done exemplary work in the field of development journalism. Special Yojana issue on 'employment and self-employment' released - covered wide ranging issues including those related to livelihood opportunities, entrepreneurship, employment data; also featured success stories of programmes like MUDRA Yojana
- **Multimedia Exhibition** on 150 years of Celebrating Mahatma Gandhi's Birth Anniversary organized by Bureau of Outreach and Communication. The Exhibition had many engaging features like Quiz on the life of Mahatma Gandhi, interactive timeline depicting life of Mahatma Gandhi, Photo Booth with various backgrounds to choose from, 3D Video Wall, etc. It also showcased several books on the Life of Mahatma Gandhi. "The Republican Ethic" and "LoktantraKeSwar" book released - selected speeches of President Shri Ram NathKovind, brought out by Directorate of Publications Division.
- **Broadcast Sector** 15th Asia Media Summit organized in Delhi with the theme, 'Telling Our Stories – Asia and More'; it encouraged dialogue and cooperation in Media Sector in the Region All India Radio streaming services launched on Amazon Alexa Smart Speakers - a synergy of the old and modern forms of communication. The initiative will also benefit Indian diaspora since now anyone from any part of the world can listen to the programmes in All India Radio through Alexa. 9 DSNG vans of Doordarshan flagged off - with 4 of these 9 DSNGs meant for Gangtok, Kohima, Imphal and Agartala, the development stories of the people of North-East will further reach out to people.
- **Films Sector** Agreement on Film Co-production between India and Israel signed - to facilitate mutual exchange of art and culture, create goodwill and better understanding among the people of both the countries as well as various aspects of film making. The Agreement will also help in generation of employment among artistic, technical as well as non-technical personnel.
- **65th National Film Awards** organized - Late veteran Actor Shri Vinod Khanna awarded DadasahebPhalke Award; Late eminent Actress, Sridevi awarded Best Actress for the Hindi movie Mom; Riddhi Sen given Best Actor award for Nagarkirtan; Assamese movie Village Rockstars awarded Best Feature Film and Baahubali - The Conclusion awarded as Best Popular Film providing Wholesome Entertainment; Jayaraj given Best Direction Award for Malayalam movie Bhayanakam.
- **ASEAN India Film Festival** organized in Delhi - the festival acts as a vehicle of cultural exchange and facilitates people to people contact in member countries, especially amongst youth. Dedicated web portallaunches by Film Facilitation Office to disseminate information on filming locations and the facilities available in India for film production/post production and to allow foreign film makers to make online application for permission of shooting of feature films, reality TV shows and commercial TV series in India.
- **India Pavilion was organized at Cannes Film Festival** 2018, along with exploration of co-production opportunities between India and France in May 2018. India Pavilion was also set up in Berlin Film Festival (Feb 2018) and Toronto International Film Festival (Sep 2018).
- **India hosts European Union Film Festival** - 24 latest European films from 23 EU Member States screened. The festival traversed through 11 cities in India including New Delhi, Chennai, Port Blair, Pune, Puducherry, Kolkata, Jaipur, Visakhapatnam, Thrissur, Hyderabad and Goa from 18th June till 31st August 2018.
- **India Pavilion organized at Videocittà 2018** in Rome Film Festival. India was the partner country at Videocittà 2018, an event focussing on Virtual Reality, Video gaming, Animation, Film Making, etc. India Pavilion atVideocittà 2018 showcased Indian films' heritage, ease of film shooting in India, promoted film shooting locations in India, International Film Festival of India, Indian Cinema from different regions and Audio Visual Co Production between India and Italy.
- **49th International Film Festival of India** organized in Goa. Israel was the country in focus and Jharkhand was the state in focus during the Festival. The Festival opened with the world premiere of 'The Aspern Papers'. 'Donbass' directed by Sergei Loznitsa has won the coveted Golden Peacock; Lijo Jose Pellissery was conferred Best Director Award for 'Ee.Ma.Yau'; Chemban Vinod was declared the Best Actor (Male) and AnastasiiaPustovit got Best Actor

(Female) Award. Dan Wolman was given the Lifetime Achievement Award. Master Scriptwriter Salim Khan was presented with IFFI Special Award at IFFI 2018 Closing Ceremony, for his Lifetime Contribution to Cinema.

SC/ST Act amendment

- **What's the issue?** In March 2018, Supreme Court diluted the stringent provisions of SC/ST Act (Subhash Kashinath Mahajan v. State of Maharashtra). The verdict saw a huge backlash across the country. The government filed a review petition in the Supreme Court and subsequently amended the 1989 Act back to its original form. Following this, several petitions were filed challenging the amendments.
- **Guidelines issued by the Supreme Court and rationale behind it:** Supreme court gave the judgement on the pretext that Innocents cannot be terrorised by the provisions of the SC/ST Act and their fundamental rights need to be protected. The court said that public servants could be arrested only with the written permission of their appointing authority, while in the case of private employees, the Senior Superintendent of Police concerned should allow it. A preliminary inquiry should be conducted before the FIR was registered to check if the case fell within the ambit of the Act, and whether it was frivolous or motivated, the court ruled.
- **Why this decision?** The court referred to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2015, which said that closure reports had been filed in 15-16 percent of the complaints under the Act. Over 75% of such cases taken up by the courts had resulted in acquittals/ withdrawal or compounding of the cases. Therefore, there was a need to safeguard innocent citizens against false implication and unnecessary arrest for which there is no sanction under the law.
- **What the Court missed?** Article 338 stipulates that governments should consult the "National Commission for SC" on all major policy matters affecting Scheduled Castes. Similarly, article 338 A mandates all major policy decision affecting STs to be taken in consultation with "National Commission for Scheduled Tribes". Considering this, Supreme Court is also bound to hear these commissions before pronouncements that are likely to impact SC/STs on a whole. However, while issuing guidelines, the court has not taken views of these stakeholders.
- **The government decided to retain original provisions because of the following reasons:** There had been no decrease in the atrocities committed on SC/ST people despite the laws meant to protect their civil rights. The sad state of affairs was despite the existence of 195 special courts across 14 States to exclusively try Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) cases.
- **Figures and facts:** Cases registered: As per National Crime Records Bureau statistics, there is no decrease in the crimes against SC/ST people. The number of cases registered under the PoA in 2014 was 47,124; 44839 in 2015 and 47,338 in 2016. Conviction rate: In 2014, 28.8% of the cases were convicted. The acquittal was 71.2% and pendency of cases 85.3%. The next year saw 25.8% convictions, 74.2% acquittal and 87.3% pendency. In 2016, the convictions was 24.9%, acquittal 75.1% and pendency 89.3%.
- **The Amendment Bill seeks to insert three new clauses after Section 18 of the original Act:** The first stipulates that for the purposes of the Act, "preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of a First Information Report against any person."
- **The second stipulates** that the arrest of a person accused of having committed an offence under the Act would not require any approval. The third says that the provisions of Section 438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure — which deals with anticipatory bail — shall not apply to a case under this Act, "notwithstanding any judgment or order of any Court."
- **Way ahead:** The amendments to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018 is a move in the right direction. However, no matter how strong a piece of legislation is, all will depend on how well it is implemented.
- **If the implementing agency** does not do its bit then the legislative effort would not be successful in the long run. The administrative set up, which includes police machinery, investigating agencies and judiciary, has to work together to effectively implement such a law.

Neglected diseases

- **The findings come** from an analysis of global investment into research and development (R&D) on new products for neglected diseases in developing countries, as part of the eleventh annual G-Finder survey. The survey looks at funding for a number of diseases like trachoma, buruli ulcer, rheumatic fever, meningitis, leptospirosis and also for HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, dengue, hepatitis C and leprosy.
- **It examines funding** from government sources, philanthropies, private sector funding and other types of organisations.

- **Key findings of the report:** With USD 1,595 million, the US government is the largest funder. The Indian government, which contributes USD 72 million, comes 4th. Among other low and middle income countries (LMICs), India is credited with being responsible for the “lion's share” of public funding. India also records the strongest global growth in public funding for R&D on neglected diseases since 2009.
- **Need for and significance of R&D into neglected tropical diseases:** The need for drugs for neglected diseases and also for drug R&D is high in India. The country tops the number of cases for 11 different neglected tropical diseases such as lymphatic filariasis, visceral leishmaniasis, trachoma, tapeworm, roundworm, hookworm, whipworm, dengue and leprosy. In 2017, there were around 2.8 million new cases of TB, which brought down the global decline of TB. One third of all TB deaths worldwide happen in India.
- **Recent policies on neglected diseases research in India:** The National Health Policy (2017) sets an ambition to stimulate innovation to meet health needs and ensure that new drugs are affordable for those who need them most, but it does not specifically tackle neglected diseases.
- **The National Policy on Treatment of Rare Diseases (2018)** includes infectious tropical diseases and identifies a need to support research on treatments for rare diseases. It has not yet prioritised diseases and areas for research funding or how innovation would be supported.
- **What's missing?** A comprehensive policy to foster research and innovation in drug discovery, diagnostics, and vaccine development in neglected tropical diseases is lacking. While political intent and will are expressed in a few, clear operational plans and funding mechanisms are not specified. Consequently, follow-up action is patchy or absent.
- **No institutional mechanism** exists at a national level to identify gaps in neglected diseases research, set priorities, liaise with research institutions, or monitor research output. There is often no coordination between the various funding and research bodies to prioritise the research agenda and minimise duplication.
- **Way ahead:** A unified programme on neglected diseases encompassing research and elimination measures is likely to have a greater impact in prioritising the matter in the health agenda and streamlining efforts towards disease elimination. Creating an enabling environment for research and innovation will be crucial if India is to achieve the target set in sustainable development goal 3.3 to end epidemics of neglected tropical diseases by 2030.
- **Why are some tropical diseases called “neglected”?** The people who are most affected by these diseases are often the poorest populations, living in remote, rural areas, urban slums or conflict zones. Neglected tropical diseases persist under conditions of poverty and are concentrated almost exclusively in impoverished populations in the developing world.
- **Challenges and concerns:** Lacking a strong political voice, people affected by these tropical diseases have a low profile and status in public health priorities. Lack of reliable statistics and unpronounceable names of diseases have all hampered efforts to bring them out of the shadows. Neglected tropical diseases affect more than 1 billion people, primarily poor populations living in tropical and subtropical climates.
- **They are frequently** clustered together geographically and individuals are often afflicted with more than one parasite or infection. More than 70% of countries and territories that report the presence of neglected tropical diseases are low-income or lower middle-income economies.
- **Spread and control:** Infections are caused by unsafe water, poor housing conditions and poor sanitation. Children are the most vulnerable to these diseases, which kill, impair or permanently disable millions of people every year, often resulting in life-long physical pain and social stigmatization.
- **Many neglected tropical** diseases can be prevented, eliminated or even eradicated with improved access to existing safe and cost-effective tools. Control relies on simple interventions that can be carried out by non-specialists — for example schoolteachers, village heads and local volunteers — in community-based preventive action.

Nitrogen pollution

- **South Asian Nitrogen Hub:** The South Asian Nitrogen Hub, a partnership led by the UK's Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and comprising around 50 organisations from across the UK and South Asia, will be established with funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under its Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).
- **The Hub is one of 12 GCRF** hubs announced by the UKRI to address intractable challenges in sustainable development. The interdisciplinary hubs will work across 85 countries with governments, international agencies, partners and NGOs.
- **India is a major partner** with 18 Indian institutions in this project. India is the only country in South Asia that has completed its nitrogen assessment over a year ago and is already co-leading the South Asian nitrogen assessment with CEH, UK, for the UN Environment.
- **Nitrogen as an essential nutrient:** Nitrogen, which is a vital macronutrient for most plants, is the most abundant element in the atmosphere.
- **A little over 78%** of dry air on Earth is nitrogen. But atmospheric nitrogen, or dinitrogen, is unreactive and cannot be utilised by plants directly. Until the beginning of the 20th century, farmers depended on a natural process called nitrogen fixation for the conversion of atmospheric nitrogen into reactive nitrogen in the soil: nitrogen-fixing bacteria like rhizobia live symbiotically with leguminous plants, providing nitrogen to the plant and soil in the form of reactive compounds like ammonia and nitrate.

- **But the natural nitrogen cycle** was inadequate to feed the growing population. Scientists Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch solved this problem by producing ammonia by combining atmospheric nitrogen with hydrogen gas at high temperature and pressure—known as the Haber-Bosch process. The Green Revolution, which was instrumental in establishing food security in the developing countries in the 1960s, was driven by artificial nitrogen-fixation. Today, about half of the world's population depends on this process for its nutrition.
- **How Nitrogen turned into pollutant from nutrient how it is affecting health and environment?** Nitrogen is an inert gas that's necessary for life. But we're changing it into forms that are harmful, overloading the environment with it, and throwing the natural nitrogen cycle out of whack.
- **Nitrogen compounds running off** farmland have led to water pollution problems around the world, while nitrogen emissions from industry, agriculture and vehicles make a big contribution to air pollution. Over 80% of the nitrogen in soil is not utilised by humans. While over four-fifths of the nitrogen is used to feed livestock, only about six per cent reaches humans in case of non-vegetarian diet, as compared to the 20% that reaches the plate of a vegetarian.
- **Nitrogen becomes a pollutant** when it escapes into the environment and reacts with other organic compounds. It is either released into the atmosphere, gets dissolved in water sources such as rivers, lakes or groundwater, or remains in the soil. While it might lead to favourable growth of species that can utilise this nutrient, nitrogen as a pollutant is often detrimental to the environment and health.
- **According to the World Health Organization**, nitrate-contaminated drinking water can cause reduced blood function, cancer and endemic goiters. Surplus inputs of nitrogen compounds have been found to cause soil acidification. The lowering pH, as a result of the acidification, can lead to nutrient disorders and increased toxicity in plants. It may also affect natural soil decomposition.
- **Nitrogen pollution has a significant impact on the environment:** It creates of harmful algal blooms and dead zones in our waterways and oceans; the algae produce toxins which are harmful to human and aquatic organisms (and indirectly affects fisheries and biodiversity in coastal areas). Contamination of drinking water. 10 million people in Europe are potentially exposed to drinking water with nitrate concentrations above recommended levels. This can have an adverse effect on human health.
- **Food Security:** Excessive nitrogen fertiliser application contributes to soil nutrient depletion. As the world needs to feed an ever growing population loss of arable land is major global problem. The release of Nitrous Oxide is essentially a greenhouse gas which is harmful to the environment.

Jaipur Literature Festival:

- **Context:** The historic Diggi Palace is hosting the five-day Jaipur Literature Festival.
- **About the festival:** The Jaipur Literature Festival is an annual literary festival which takes place in the Indian city of Jaipur each January. It was founded in 2006, and from 2008 has been produced by Teamwork Arts. The Festival's core values are to serve as a democratic, non-aligned platform offering free and fair access.

INS Kohassa:

- **Context: (Indian Naval Station) INS Kohassa has been commissioned at Diglipur on North Andaman.** Significance: Indian Navy will have full command over the new airbase, which will play an important role in strengthening the monitoring capabilities of Indian Navy in this part of the Indian Ocean. This region of Indian Ocean is very critical because it has been witnessing a lot of muscle-flexing by China.
- **Geographical importance:** Located in the region close to the opening of the Straits of Malacca, INS Kohassa is just 90 km from Indonesia, 45 km from Myanmar and 550 km from Thailand. It is interesting to note that around 80% of all cargo going to and from China passes through the Malacca.
- **NAS Shibpur:** The location had earlier been the site of (Naval Air Station) NAS Shibpur, which had been used as a waystation for Dornier aircraft and Chetak helicopters. Established in 2001, NAS Shibpur had been used by Dornier aircraft and Chetak helicopters to conduct surveillance and monitoring operations in the North Andaman Islands region.

Bandipur Tiger Reserve:

- **Why in News?** The differences of opinion between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways over the proposal to construct elevated roads through sections of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve have given a sliver of hope to the State government to tackle the night traffic ban on National Highway 766.
- **What's the issue?** The contention between the two Central Ministries on the issue, in which Kerala and Karnataka have stakes, had led the Supreme Court to ask the Centre to arrive at a consensus within six weeks. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has not concurred with the project for an elevated 5-km road over Bandipur while the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) is willing to construct five elevated sections, of which four will be in Bandipur and one in Wayanad.
- **Key facts on Bandipur National Park:** Located in Karnataka. Together with the adjoining Nagarhole National Park, Mudumalai National Park and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, it is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve making it the largest protected area in southern India and largest habitat of wild elephants in south Asia. The park is flanked by the Kabini river in the north and the Moyar river in the south. The Nugu river runs through the park. The highest point in the park is on a hill called Himavad Gopalaswamy Betta.

Bio-Jet fuel for Military Aircraft:

- **Context:** Indigenous produced bio-fuel has been finally cleared for use by Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification (CEMILAC).
- **The bio-jet fuel** has been produced from seeds of Jatropha plant sourced from Chhattisgarh and processed at CSIR-IIP's lab at Dehradun.

ISRO's first mission of 2019:

- **Context:** India has successfully launched Microsat-R, a military satellite and Kalamsat onboard its Polar rocket PSLV C44, in the first mission for the ISRO in 2019.
- **Microsat-R is meant for military use.** Kalamsat is a communication satellite with a life span of two months. The nanosatellite is a 10cm cube weighing 1.2 kg. It was the first to use the rocket's fourth stage as an orbital platform. It is the world's lightest and first ever 3D-printed satellite.
- **9th National Voters' Day:** Context: India is celebrating the 9th National Voters' Day (NVD) on 25th January 2019. Theme: 'No Voter to be Left Behind'.
- **About National Voters Day:** The National Voters' Day (NVD) is celebrated all over the country on January 25 every year since 2011 to mark the Foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on 25th January 1950. The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment, especially for the new voters.
- **Crocodylus palustris:** Why in News? The mugger crocodile, also called marsh crocodile or broad-snouted crocodile, has come to the centre of renewed attention in Gujarat, where the Forest Department has started evacuating muggers from two ponds on the Sardar Sarovar Dam premises on the Narmada, to facilitate a seaplane service at the Statue of Unity.
- **Key facts:** Already extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar. Listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List since 1982. In India, it is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.



India and OECD sign agreement to enable India's participation in Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) to be held in 2021

- **Participation in PISA** will improve learning levels of children and enhance quality of education in the country: Shri Prakash Javadekar
- **A Signing ceremony of Agreement** between India and OECD for India's participation in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2021, in presence of Union HRD Minister, Shri Prakash Javadekar was held in New Delhi today. The Agreement was signed by Shri Maneesh Garg, Joint Secretary, MHRD and Mr Andreas Schleicher, Director (PISA) in OECD.
- **While addressing the gathering**, the Minister said that the Government of India has decided that India will participate in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) to be conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2021. He said that the participation in PISA 2021 would indicate the health of the education system and would motivate other schools /states in the subsequent cycles. This will lead to improvement in the learning levels of the children and enhance the quality of education in the country. He also informed that OECD has agreed to ask some of the questions based on Indian context. The Minister hoped that our students will perform well and we will get a good position in the overall rankings.
- **Ms Rina Ray, Secretary**, Department of School Education & Literacy, Govt of India, Junaid Ahmad, Country Director, World Bank, Amit Dar, Director, Human Development, Shabnam Sinha, Lead Communication Officer, World Bank and Marguerite, Senior Education Specialist, World Bank were also present on the occasion.
- **Following are some of the important features of India's participation in PISA:** Schools run by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and schools in the UT of Chandigarh will participate. · Within the country (or specific geography to be covered in case of large countries), PISA covers a sample of 15-year-old students representing all forms of schooling i.e. public, private, private aided etc.
- **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. It would lead to recognition and acceptability of Indian students and prepare them for the global economy in the 21st century.
- **Learnings from participation in PISA** will help to introduce competency based examination reforms in the school system and help move away from rote learning. The CBSE and NCERT will be part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.
- **§ More than 80 countries, including 44 middle-income** countries, have participated in the assessment since the first round of testing in 2000. Next round of PISA is going to be held in 2021. The list of registered countries includes Brazil, China (certain areas like Shanghai and Beijing) and countries from South-East Asia like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.
- **What are the key features of PISA?** PISA is a triennial international survey (every three years) which aims to evaluate the education system worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. Students are assessed in reading, mathematics, science and collaborative problem-solving.
- **Participation in PISA allows benchmarking performance against a wide range of countries.** PISA uses test items aligned with international benchmarks. Test items are adapted to the local context and language, pilot tested and validated before being used for the test. OECD have agreed to contextualize the questions for Indian students.

70th Republic Day

- **Chief guest:** President Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa. This is the second time a South African leader is Chief Guest at Republic Day — Nelson Mandela was the chief guest in 1995.
- **Significance:** Republic day in India is celebrated every year on 26th of January to honour the Constitution of India as it came into force on the same day in the year 1950.

- **Highlights of the republic day- key facts relevant for Prelims and Mains:** The 70th Republic Day parade will have the highest number of women officers participating in the celebrations with Lt. Bhavana Kasturi leading a contingent of 144 male personnel. This is the first time in the history of Indian Army that a woman will lead the Army services corps.
- **An all-women contingent** of Assam Rifles, India's oldest paramilitary force, will be participating for the first time. The contingent was opened for women in 2012.
- **The weapons which will** be showcased for the first time in a Republic day parade are M777 and K-9 Vajra ultra light howitzers along with the Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) missile of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- **For the first time** in the Republic Day parade, An-32 aircraft will be flying using a mix of traditional and biofuel.
- **Four former Indian National Army (INA)** soldiers will participate for the first time in the parade. INA was an armed force formed by Indian nationalist Rash Behari Bose in 1942 in Southeast Asia during World War II.
- **'Sankhnaad', a martial tune** created for the Indian armed forces, will be played for the first time on the 70th Republic Day parade. Since Independence, the Indian defence forces have been playing 'martial tune' created by the Britishers. 'Sankhnaad' is based on Indian classical music.
- **Why January 26th?** The Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950, a date specially chosen to coincide with the anniversary of 'Purna Swaraj Diwas'. January 26, 1930 was marked as 'Purna Swaraj Diwas', or the day the nation would attain complete freedom from its colonisers by the Congress.
- **The members of the drafting committee** felt that the birth of the constitution should be observed on a day that held some significance in their fight for independence. When India was ultimately granted freedom by the British in 1947, but on August 15 and not January 26, the date was instead assigned to celebrating India's Republic Day.
- **This was the day the Indian Independence Act** was consequently repealed and India was established as a democratic republic, no longer a dominion of the British Crown.

SC issues contempt notices to RBI

- **What is contempt under the Indian law?** In India, the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, divides contempt into civil contempt and criminal contempt. Civil contempt is a 'wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other processes of a Court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to the court'.
- **'Criminal contempt'** is 'the publication (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which:
- **Scandalises or tends** to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of, any court. Prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with the due course of any judicial proceeding. Interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner.'
- **Significance:** Judiciary ensures justice and equality to every individual and institutions, therefore, the makers of the constitution upheld the sanctity and prestige of the revered institution by placing provisions under articles 129 and 215 of the constitution, which enables the courts to hold individuals in contempt if they attempt to demean or belittle their authority.
- **Is criticism allowed?** Yes. The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, very clearly states that fair criticism of any case which has been heard and decided is not contempt.
- **2016 Amendment:** The statute of 1971 has recently been amended by the Contempt of Courts (Amendment) Act, 2006 to include the defence of truth under Section 13 of the original legislation.
- **Section 13** that already served to restrict the powers of the court in that they were not to hold anyone in contempt unless it would substantially interfere with the due process of justice, the amendment further states that the court must permit 'justification by truth as a valid defence if it is satisfied that it is in public interest and the request for invoking the said defence is bona fide.'

Report on 'e-waste' by UN

- **The joint report** calls for a new vision for e-waste based on the “circular economy” concept, whereby a regenerative system can minimize waste and energy leakage.
- **International convention in this regard:** E-waste export, though, is regulated under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, which has been ratified by 188 nations.
- **So where is the crisis?** It lies in the fact that globally, only up to 20% of e-waste is recycled. The rest is undocumented and experts predict that it gets buried under the ground in landfills for centuries as it is not biodegradable.
- **And how does it impact us?** “From lead-lined, cathode ray tubes to old TVs, to lead and chromium in circuit boards (of various devices), e-waste contains substances that are hazardous to human health, including, mercury, cadmium and lead. E-waste can pollute water sources and food-supply chains.”
- **Solutions to the crisis- Highlights of the report by UN:** The report calls for systematic collaboration with major brands, small and medium-sized enterprises, academia, trade unions, civil society and associations in a deliberative process to reorient the system and reduce the waste of resources each year with a value greater than the GDP of most countries.
- **To capture the global** value of materials in e-waste and create global circular value chains, use new technology to create service business models, better product tracking and manufacturer or retailer take-back programmes.
- **The report notes that** material efficiency, recycling infrastructure and scaling up the volume and quality of recycled materials to meet the needs of electronics supply chains will all be essential for future production.
- **The producers should** also have buy-back or return offers for old equipment, and plans to incentivise the consumer financially. The report also advocates a system of ‘urban mining’ by strengthening the extended producer responsibility provision.
- **Job potential:** If the electronics sector is supported with the right policy mix and managed in the right way, it could lead to the creation of millions of decent jobs worldwide.
- **E-waste Coalition:** The report supports the work of the E-waste Coalition, which includes International Labour Organization (ILO); International Telecommunication Union (ITU); United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR); United Nations University (UNU) and Secretariats of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions.
- **Why worry about e-waste?** Organic and easily recyclable metal, glass and plastic waste need not permanently remain in landfills. But hard-to-recover substances from e-waste like mercury make their home in landfills and keep leaching into ground water.
- **In recent years,** its e-waste has grown faster than earlier anticipated. The Greenpeace study found e-waste growing at 15% annually and projected it to go up to 800,000 tonnes by 2012. But it stood at 1.7 million tonnes in 2014, the fifth highest in the world, according to a UN study.
- **In India, e waste** accounts for 4% of global e-waste and 2.5% of global GDP (2014 figures) – so it has a higher share of e-waste than its share of gross domestic product (GDP). For China, the two ratios are about the same. The US, on the other hand, accounts for a lower share of global e-waste than its share of GDP.
- **According to a 2011** Rajya Sabha secretariat study, e-waste accounts for 70% of Indian landfills. If penetration of electronics and electrical products in India by 2030 have to grow even to today’s average world capita which leads to e waste of 6 kg per capita, the absolute e waste generation for India will grow five times the current level to 9 million tonnes in 2030.
- **Why it is difficult to manage e waste in India?** The producers/manufacturers do not have adequate information on their website regarding e waste management.
- **Customer care** representatives do not have inkling about any take back or recycling programme and even if they have set up collection centres, they are simply not enough for a geographically vast country like India.
- **India being a vast country,** setting up collection mechanism is a big challenge. If any of the brands try individually to reach out to all corners of the country, it will economically not be sustainable or feasible. Improper enforcement of the existing laws is another hurdle.

Bandar Abbas to host IONS next month

- **About IONS:** What is it? IONS, the 21st century’s first significant international maritime security initiative launched in February 2008, provides a forum for discussion of regional maritime issues and promotes friendly relationships among member nations.

- **It is a voluntary** initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues and, in the process, endeavors to generate a flow of information between naval professionals that would lead to common understanding and possibly agreements on the way ahead.
- **Under the charter** of business adopted in 2014, the grouping has working groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and anti-piracy now renamed as maritime security.
- **The 35 member nations** of the IONS are grouped into four sub-regions- South Asian, West Asian, East African and South East Asian and Australian. There are nine states with observer status.

Various Awards:

- **Bharat Ratna:** Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of the Republic of India. The provision of Bharat Ratna was introduced in 1954. Eligibility: Any person without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex is eligible for these awards. There is no written provision that Bharat Ratna should be awarded to Indian citizens only.
- **It is awarded** in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour. The award was originally limited to achievements in the arts, literature, science and public services but the government expanded the criteria to include "any field of human endeavour" in December 2011.
- **In terms of Article 18** (1) of the Constitution, the award cannot be used as a prefix or suffix to the recipient's name. However, should an award winner consider it necessary, he/she may use the expression in their biodata/letterhead/visiting card etc. to indicate that he/she is a recipient of the award.
- **About Padma Awards:** Padma Awards – one of the highest civilian Awards of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. They were instituted in the year 1954. The Awards are given in various disciplines/ fields of activities, viz.- art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.
- **Categories:** Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service;(it is a second degree honour). Padma Bhushan is awarded for distinguished service of high order. (it is a third degree honour). Padma Shri is awarded for distinguished service in any field. (it is a fourth degree honour).
- **The awards** are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year. The award is normally not conferred posthumously. However, in highly deserving cases, the Government could consider giving an award posthumously if the demise of the person proposed to be honoured has been recent, say within a period of one year preceding the Republic Day on which it is proposed to announce the award.

Strategic programme between India and South Africa:

- **Context:** India and South Africa have sealed a three-year strategic programme covering all aspects of bilateral ties.
- **The strategic** programme will cover cooperation in a range of areas, including defence and security, trade and investment, the blue economy, tourism, IT and agriculture.
- **Facts:** Strategic Partnership has been established between India and South Africa through the Red Fort Declaration of March 1997 and the Tshwane Declaration of October 2006.

The whys and what ifs of central bank autonomy:

- **The debate over Central Bank's** autonomy has also come up in the US. President Donald Trump has been engaging in a Twitter war with the Federal Reserve against its policy of raising interest rates. India is not new to this issue.

- **Relationship between central banks and governments around the world is debated:** Central banks everywhere, from Turkey to the US, are under increasing pressure from the governments. While central bankers say that they need to be free from pressures from the governments and lobby groups to focus on their job of containing inflation and maintaining financial stability, their critics say that they are too secretive and have leaned in favour of big financial institutions over the interests of common citizens.
- **In News:** The mandate of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ), which first put in place an inflation targeting regime was changed from its sole objective of price stability to also include fostering sustainable employment.
- **In the UK,** the Bank of England and Her Majesty's Treasury signed a memorandum of agreement on the financial relationship between the two outlining the framework for determining its capital, payment in lieu of its dividend, issue of notes and the information sharing arrangements between the Bank and the Treasury.
- **Why the government should have a say in Central Bank's roles?** In a democracy, the elected representatives should have the last word on how the country should be run. The government should decide on the amount of emphasis on job creation versus inflation targeting.
- **Given the immense power** the central bank has in influencing the economy, a fully autonomous central bank can easily design policies to thwart the will of the people. For example, voters elect a government to create more jobs, but the central bank can keep interest rates high to stifle investment and, consequently, job creation.
- **Concerns and challenges associated?** Although the government is elected by the people and is supposed to act in the interest of the electorate, politicians whose chief concern is winning re-elections run it. Therefore, Politicians will have a natural tendency to engage in deficit spending (free handouts, higher support prices, and investment projects by state-owned enterprises) just before or just after elections to boost their chances. Politicians can also use the state-owned banking system to benefit their constituents by granting loan waivers.
- **These policies are not only** inflationary but will also adversely affect the health of the banking system. The costs of these policies in the long run far outweigh their short-term benefits to a subsection of the population.

Why Central Banks should have autonomy?

- **Take the example of India.** Successive governments, both at the States and Centre, have implemented farm loan waivers to win elections. Controlling the harm from such actions is the case for an independent and autonomous central bank. Such a central bank can fight the inflationary pressures resulting from deficit spending and also potentially reduce the benefits of such government handouts in terms of economic growth. This, in turn, will reduce the government's incentives to engage in such handouts in the first place.
- **An independent Central Bank** may have more credibility. If people have more confidence in the Central Bank, this helps to reduce inflationary expectations. In turn, this makes inflation easier to keep low.
- **What's the issue with India?** In India, RBI does not have formal autonomy. While RBI's mandate is to ensure price stability keeping in mind the objective of growth, its board is dominated by government nominees. In effect, the government has formal control over RBI.
- **Current point of contention between RBI and the government:** Section 7 (1) of The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, became a contentious issue after the tension between the central bank and government turned into a public spat over the last few months.
- **What is Section 7** of RBI act and how it empowers centre to intervene in the functioning of RBI? Section 7 says: The Central Government may from time to time give such directions to the Bank as it may, after consultation with the Governor of the Bank, consider necessary in the public interest.
- **Subject to any such directions,** the general superintendence and direction of the affairs and business of the Bank shall be entrusted to a Central Board of Directors which may exercise all powers and do all acts and things which may be exercised or done by the Bank.
- **Save as otherwise provided** in regulations made by the Central Board, the Governor and in his absence the Deputy Governor nominated by him in this behalf, shall also have powers of general superintendence and direction of the affairs and the business of the Bank, and may exercise all powers and do all acts and things which may be exercised or done by the Bank.
- **Clearly, the section** empowers the government to issue directions in public interest to the central bank, which otherwise does not take orders from the government.
- **What needs to be done? Fine balance:** There has to be a forum within the democratic structure where the RBI is obligated to explain and defend its position on its policy decisions.
- **The governor** should be responsible and accountable to Parliament and not to a particular government or the ministry of finance, or minister. He can testify to Parliament twice a year. In separate testimony in both houses of Parliament, the lawmakers can ask questions of the RBI Governor and the latter can respond.

- **A better way** to sort out these differences and to come to a conclusion is to have a larger debate with technical experts weighing in.
- **On issues of** operational autonomy, the central government needs to lay off its pressure on the RBI. On macro issues such as exchange rate management and RBI's dividend policy, written agreements that clearly demarcate roles and responsibilities can be thrashed out.
- **Way ahead:** RBI is autonomous but within the framework of the RBI Act. It is thus clear that the central bank cannot claim absolute autonomy. It is autonomy within the limits set by the government and its extent depends on the subject and the context. Ultimately, it is the elected representative ruling the country who is answerable to the citizen every five years. The representative while explaining the economy's performance to own up for everything, including the RBI's actions, as his own. Therefore, the time is ripe for bringing in a fine line between RBI and the government which does not undermine the Central Bank's autonomy on one hand and limits absolute autonomy on the other.



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Year End Review: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

- **The year 2018** was a testimony to India's leadership and commitment on environmental issues as the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi was awarded the United Nation's highest environmental honour - Champions of the Earth Award. The UN recognised the Prime Minister in the Policy Leadership category for his bold environmental leadership on the global stage. His pioneering work in championing the International Solar Alliance where the country heralded a global coalition of nations to tackle climate change by leveraging the power of solar energy which has been lauded globally. Some of the major highlights of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the year 2018 are outlined below:-
- **World Environment Day:** Considering India's global leadership in environmental protection and climate change sectors, the UNEP had chosen India to be the global host for World Environment Day (WED) on 5th June, 2018.
- **The main event** was organized in Delhi and included a series of conferences in Vigyan Bhawan, a mega exhibition in Rajpath Lawns behind Vigyan Bhawan and the concluding event was graced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister and dignitaries from UN also attended the event. This WED, 2018 focused on "Plastic Pollution" which is one of the most challenging environmental concerns today.
- **single-use plastic pollution** was being done through Eco-clubs in States/UTs. Some of the major activities undertaken were cleaning of identified beaches, river stretches and Mini- marathon on 3.6.2018. In consultation with State Nodal Agencies implementing the Eco-club programme, 24 beaches and 24 river stretches were identified for intensive cleaning drives which began with a mega inaugural ceremony at Goa on 14.5.2018. Students from various schools and colleges participated in this drive. Various cultural programmes, quiz competition, debate, awareness rallies etc were organized. Besides the above mentioned cleanliness drives, Mini Marathon was held at Vinay Marg, New Delhi on 3.6.2018 to spread awareness on proper utilization of plastic. The marathon was attended by around 10,000 Ecoclub students from Delhi - NCR. Also mini- marathons were also organized in other five cities namely Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Gangtok, Bhopal and Bhubaneswar.

Niti Aayog 2.0

- **Need for setting up of 'Niti Aayog 2.0':** Replacing the Planning Commission, which was promoting regionally balanced growth in India, by the Niti Aayog, a think tank, has reduced the government's policy reach. Therefore, the need has arisen for an institution to do the job at hand related to the structural issues including removal of regional imbalances in the economy.
- **Few suggestions related to composition and functions of the revamped Niti Aayog:** It will be responsible for allocating development or transformational capital or revenue grants to the states.
- **In order to make** the new Niti Aayog more effective, it is essential to ensure that the institution is at the 'High Table' of decision making of the government. This means the vice-chairman of the new Niti Aayog will need to be a permanent invitee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).
- **It need not be** involved with the approval of the state's annual expenditure programmes. It should rather strive to be a think-tank with 'praxis' possessing considerable financial muscle and devote its energies to outline coherent medium and long term strategy and corresponding investment resources for transforming India.
- **New Niti Aayog** will annually need the resources of around 1.5 to 2% of the GDP to provide suitable grants to the states for mitigating the development imbalances.
- **Other arguments supporting the revamp of Niti Aayog:** NITI Aayog cannot transform a deeply unequal society into a modern economy that ensures the welfare of all its citizens, irrespective of their social identity.

- **It has no role** in influencing public or private investment. It does not seem to have influence in policymaking with long-term consequences. For instance, demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax.
- **NITI Aayog** is supposed to be a think tank. This implies that while generating new ideas, it maintains a respectable intellectual distance from the government of the day. Instead, we see uncritical praise of the Govt-sponsored schemes / programmes.

Input Credit under GST:

- **What is Input Tax Credit (ITC)?** It is the tax that a business pays on a purchase and that it can use to reduce its tax liability when it makes a sale. In other words, businesses can reduce their tax liability by claiming credit to the extent of GST paid on purchases.
- **A business** under composition scheme cannot avail of input tax credit. ITC cannot be claimed for personal use or for goods that are exempt.
- **Significance of ITC:** One of the positive features of GST is that it helps to avoid the undesirable cost cascading effect (or tax on tax) that existed previously. Now, in the case of GST, there is the mechanism of Input Tax Credit (ITC) which helps to eliminate the cost cascading effect of the pre-GST tax regime. Under GST, there is not cost cascading effect because of two facts. First, most of the taxes are merged under a single tax, and second, the input tax credit.
- **Concerns over its misuse:** There could be possibility of misuse of the provision by unscrupulous businesses by generating fake invoices just to claim tax credit. As much as 80% of the total GST liability is being settled by ITC and only 20% is deposited as cash.
- **Under the present** dispensation, there is no provision for real time matching of ITC claims with the taxes already paid by suppliers of inputs. The matching is done on the basis of system generated GSTR-2A, after the credit has been claimed. Based on the mismatch highlighted by GSTR-2A and ITC claims, the revenue department sends notices to businesses.
- **Currently there** is a time gap between ITC claim and matching them with the taxes paid by suppliers. Hence there is a possibility of ITC being claimed on the basis of fake invoices.
- **Need of the hour- real time updates:** To fill the gap, a new return filing system has been proposed. Once it becomes operational, it would become possible for the department to match the ITC claims and taxes paid on a real time basis. The revenue department would then analyse the large number of ITC claims to find out if they are genuine or based on fake invoices and take corrective action.

Zearalenone in cereals:

- **Why in News?** While numerous studies document this toxin in cereals across the world, no data existed for India until now. This month, a Journal of Food Science study detected zearalenone in wheat, rice, corn and oats from markets in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Are there any guidelines on its usage?** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India does not impose maximum limits for zearalenone, though the European Union (EU) does.
- **Why worry about this?** Fungal toxins are commonly found in food, and can be a public health concern. India regulates the levels of some of these, including aflatoxin, deoxynivalenol, ergot and patulin. The first three infest cereals, while patulin is found in apples. Each of these toxins has been associated with disease outbreaks.
- **For example,** in 1974, a hepatitis outbreak in Rajasthan and Gujarat, which made 398 people sick and killed 106, was linked to aflatoxin in maize. Meanwhile, chronic aflatoxin consumption has been shown to cause liver cancer.
- **Given this,** the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies aflatoxin as a Group 1 carcinogen, meaning there is enough evidence for its carcinogenicity.
- **In zearalenone's case,** there is no strong evidence of toxicity in humans so far, though several research groups are investigating. As a result, the IARC classifies it as a Group 3 carcinogen, which means evidence is not sufficient for an evaluation yet.
- **How Zearalenone affects?** Zearalenone behaves like oestrogen, the female sex hormone, and could cause endocrine disturbances in humans. Its nasty effects in animals, such as pigs, are documented. When fed with mouldy corn, pigs develop inflamed vaginas, infertility and other symptoms. This is why countries like Brazil regulate zearalenone levels in animal feed. In humans, the data are fuzziest.

- **What next?** More data are needed from cereals in other States, and from other storage conditions, before India decides to set limits. Since zearalenone favours cool climates, such contamination could be limited to a few States. Also, strong epidemiological data linking human zearalenone levels with diseases such as breast cancer are important. The latest findings are an excellent starting point, since nothing was known about the chemical in India so far. It is time to build upon it.

World Malaria Report of 2018

- **Significance:** This shows that India has assumed a leadership role in advancing global efforts to end malaria. The country's success provides hope to the other highest-burden countries to tackle malaria head-on.
- **India's efforts in this regard:** India's progress in fighting malaria is an outcome of concerted efforts to ensure that its malaria programme is country-owned and country-led, even as it is in alignment with globally accepted strategies.
- **At the East Asia Summit** in 2015, India pledged to eliminate the disease by 2030. Following this public declaration, India launched the five-year National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination. This marked a shift in focus from malaria "control" to "elimination". The plan provides a roadmap to achieve the target of ending malaria in 571 districts out of India's 678 districts by 2022.
- **Way ahead:** The plan requires more than ₹10,000 crore. Adequate investment combined with coordinated action between governments, civil society and philanthropic donors is imperative to achieve this goal. Since health is a State subject, State governments across the country shoulder a special responsibility in tackling the disease.
- **Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative:** Among states, Odisha's Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative is significant. The initiative aims to deliver services to the most inaccessible and hardest hit people of the State. The initiative has in-built innovative strategies to combat asymptomatic malaria.
- **The programme** is jointly implemented by Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Malaria Research (ICMR-NIMR), National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), Odisha and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV).

Charter of Patients' Rights

- **Background:** In August 2018, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced its plans to implement this Charter, which was placed in the public domain for inviting comments up to 30th September, 2018. Although nearly 4 months have elapsed since this declaration of intent, there seems to have been no further progress on finalisation and adoption of the charter.
- **Need of Charter of Patients' Rights:** Right to non-discrimination is an important right. Every patient has the right to receive treatment without any discrimination based on his or her illnesses or conditions, including HIV status or other health condition, religion, caste, ethnicity or sexual orientation.
- **The charter assumes** significance as India does not have a dedicated regulator like other countries. Existing regulations in the interest of patients and governing healthcare delivery systems are still on the anvil.
- **The draft Charter of Patients' Rights:** It has been prepared by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The draft charter includes 17 rights with description, inspired by international charters and guided by national level provisions, with the objective of consolidating these into a single document. The proposed Charter draws upon all the existing relevant provisions, thereby making them publicly known in a coherent manner.
- **The charter** also prescribes certain responsibilities that the patient must adhere to. These include: Providing all required information to their doctor, without concealing relevant facts, so as to ensure a correct diagnosis and treatment.
- **Patients are also expected** to follow all instructions regarding appointment time, co-operate with hospital staff and fellow patients, avoid creating disturbance to other patients, and maintain cleanliness in the hospital.
- **Patients should** respect the dignity of the doctor and other hospital staff. Whatever the grievance may be, patient or caregivers should not resort to violence in any form.
- **The patients should** also take responsibility for their actions based on choices made regarding treatment options and in case they refuse treatment.

Jiban Sampark Project of Odisha

- **Key features:** The Project is being undertaken in association with UNICEF. It aims to generate awareness among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha on various development and welfare initiatives of State Government, especially on women and child welfare.
- **The focus areas** of the Project are skill development, empowering communities, cooperation and innovation among the groups.
- **About 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)'**: PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. In 1975, the Government of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, while in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 17 states and one Union Territory(UT), in the country (2011 census).
- **Among the 75 listed PVTG's** the highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12).

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

- **New guidelines:** Alignment of JSS course and curriculum with National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) to standardize training.
- **Decentralization** of powers for JSSs by providing accountability and independence to district administration.
- **To identify** and promote traditional skills in the district through skilling / upskilling.
- **Evidence-based assessment system.** Easy Online certification. Linking JSS to Public Finance Management system to maintain transparency and accountability of the ecosystem. Creating livelihood linkages. Training of Trainers to develop the capacity through National Skills Training Institutes.
- **About Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS):** Formerly under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Jan Shikshan Sansthan was transferred to the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship in 2018.
- **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)** were established to provide vocational training to non-literate, neo-literate, as well as school dropouts by identifying skills as would have a market in the region of their establishment.

Indus Waters Treaty

- **Need:** This tour is an obligation imposed on both the countries by the Indus Waters Treaty 1960 between India and Pakistan. Under the treaty, both the commissioners are mandated to inspect sites and works on both the sides of Indus basin in a block of five years.
- **Is it the first time?** No. Since signing of the treaty, a total of 118 such tours on both the sides have been undertaken by the commission.
- **Indus Water treaty:** Signed in 1960 by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then Pakistan President Ayub Khan, the treaty allocates 80% of water from the six-river Indus water system to Pakistan.
- **Under the treaty,** control over six north Indian rivers were divided between the two countries. India got control over the rivers Beas, Ravi and Sutlej whereas Pakistan got control over Indus, Chenab and Jhelum. This is a unique treaty involving a third party. It was brokered by the World Bank.
- **A Permanent Indus Commission** was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. The Commission solves disputes arising over water sharing. The Treaty also provides arbitration mechanism to solve disputes amicably.

Institutions in News- SFIO:

- **About Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO):** SFIO comes under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA). It is a multi-disciplinary organisation that investigates and guides prosecution in white-collar fraud requiring expertise in forensic auditing, corporate law, information technology, capital markets, taxation, and other allied fields.
- **It was established in 2003**, based on recommendations by the Naresh Chandra Committee on Corporate Audit and Governance.
- **It received statutory powers** under the Companies Act, 2013. The rules giving it the power to make arrests came into effect in 2017.
- **Since its inception**, the SFIO was understood to be a specialized organisation that would require a wide spectrum of expertise, and recruitment would be in large part deputation-based, drawing on expertise from various civil services cadres, and on consultants with the required expertise. Cases are assigned to the SFIO based on the scale of financial misappropriation or extent of public interest that is at stake.

Sarus crane:

- **Context: Sarus crane**, whose numbers pushed to the edge by habitat degradation and human callousness, now seems to be getting a new lease of life in Uttar Pradesh, where it enjoys the status of official State bird.
- **Rise in numbers:** The population of the Sarus crane, a bird distinguishable by its red upper neck and white collar, has climbed to 15,938 as per the 2018 census (summer). This is a jump of 5.2% from 2017, when there were 15,138 Sarus cranes across U.P. Its population in Uttar Pradesh has steadily grown since 2013, as wetlands thrive and farmers, fisherfolk nurture their nests.
- **Key facts:** The Sarus (*Grus antigone*) is the tallest flying bird in the world. It is also India's only resident breeding crane. IUCN status- 'vulnerable'. It has three disjunct populations in the Indian sub-continent, south-east Asia and northern Australia.
- **Brand Finance Global 500, 2019:** Facts relevant for Prelims: Brand Finance Global 500, 2019 report has placed the 'Tata' brand at the 86th position this year. Last year, it was placed at 104th position.
- **Italian supercar manufacturer**, Ferrari, has claimed the title of the world's strongest brand according to the report.
- **Brand Finance**, the world's leading independent brand valuation and strategy consultancy, determines the relative strength of brands through a balanced scorecard of metrics evaluating marketing investment, stakeholder equity, and business performance.

Indian Railways' fastest Train 18 named Vande Bharat Express:

- **India's first indigenously built** engineless semi-high speed train, Train 18, has been named Vande Bharat Express. The train is set to run between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160 kmph.
- **Train 18 is a flagship train set;** the first prototype has been built by the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, in a record time of 20 months. The train is a 100% 'Make in India' project and is claimed to be built at half the cost of a similar train set that is imported.
- **T-18 is a self-propelled** engine-less train (similar to the Metro trains) and is energy-efficient as its coaches will be fitted with LED lights. Coaches will have automatic doors and retractable footsteps.
- **It will be inter-connected** with fully sealed gangways along with a GPS-based Passenger Information System. It is provided with of Bio toilets.

India's Second Tulip Garden to Come up in Uttarakhand:

- **Context:** India's second Tulip garden will be set up in Pithoragarh district at a cost of Rs 50 crore. First one is located in Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **The Tulip Garden** will be developed by ONGC, under its corporate social responsibility programme in over 50 hectares of forest land near Chandak hilltop.
- **The site was selected** under the 13 districts, 13 new destinations' scheme, to attract more tourists to the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand.

Atal Setu of Goa:

- **Context:** "Atal Setu" on the Mandovi river in Goa has been inaugurated. Features of the bridge: It is 5.1-km long cable-stayed bridge connecting state capital Panaji with north Goa. The bridge is constructed by the GIDC (Goa Infrastructure Development Corporation) in collaboration with construction major Larsen and Toubro.
- **Mahadayi**, also known as the Mandovi river, is known as a lifeline in the northern parts of Karnataka. The river originates and flows for 28 kilometer in Karnataka and goes through Maharashtra and Goa before meeting the Arabian Sea.

Nari Shakti: Hindi Word of the Year 2018:

- **Context:** The word Nari Shakti is chosen as the word of the Year 2018 by the Oxford dictionaries.
- **Why was Nari Shakti chosen?** Large spike in the use of word Nari Shakti in March 2018 around the Government of India's Nari Shakti Puraskar.
- **Supreme Court** also upheld Nari Shakti's prominence in 2018 with its two important decisions. One was a ban on 'triple-talaq' and second, the taking down of a rule that disallowed menstrual women entry to the Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

Pahari community:

- **Why in News?** Governor of Jammu and Kashmir has given his approval for the Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2014, providing reservation to the persons belonging to Pahari community of the State. The legislation is aimed at providing job opportunities to the Pahari people residing in backward areas of the State.
- **About Pahari community:** Pahari is a linguistic group, comprising both Muslims and Hindus, and is mainly located in Poonch, Rajouri, Kupwara and Baramulla districts. Because of the remoteness and inaccessibility of the areas of their residence, the Pahari community has historically faced considerable economic distress leading to overall socio-economic backwardness.

Satkosia Tiger Reserve:

- **Why in News?** Two trained elephants will be used to patrol Odisha's Satkosia Tiger Reserve. The two elephants are being brought from the Similipal Tiger Reserve. This step has been undertaken for resuming the ambitious tiger reintroduction programme in Satkosia.
- **About Satkosia Tiger Reserve:** It was established in 1976 as a wildlife sanctuary. The area was declared as Satkosia Tiger Reserve in 2007. Satkosia is the meeting point of two bio-geographic regions of India; the Deccan Peninsula and the Eastern Ghats, contributing immense biodiversity.

Technical textiles:

- **Context:** Ministry of Textiles will hold National Conclave on Technical Textiles in Mumbai. The event will also be a curtain raiser for Techno Tex 2019.
- **What are technical textiles?** Technical Textiles are defined as Textile material and products manufactured primarily for their Technical performance and functional properties rather than aesthetic and decorative characteristics.
- **Technical textiles** include textiles for automotive applications, medical textiles (e.g., implants), geotextiles (reinforcement of embankments), agrotexiles (textiles for crop protection), and protective clothing (e.g., heat and radiation protection for fire fighter clothing, molten metal protection for welders, stab protection and bulletproof vests, and spacesuits).



Green Good Deeds Campaign:

- **Green Good Deeds**, the societal movement launched by the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr Harsh Vardhan to protect environment and promote good living in the country, has earned worldwide accolades.
- “**Green Good Deeds**” is an idea to take environmental awareness to the people and get them involved. Formally launched in January 2018, the campaign lauds small positive actions performed by individuals or organisations to strengthen the cause of environmental protection. The Ministry has drawn up a list of over 600 Green Good Deeds and asked people to alter their behaviour to Green Good Behaviour to fulfill their Green Social Responsibility. These small, positive actions, to be performed by individuals or organisation to strengthen the cause of environmental protection have been enlisted on a mobile App called Dr Harsh Vardhan App.
- **spread awareness** amongst the general public of India about Green Good Deeds, MoEFCC has prepared high quality Audio-visual creatives (2 video spots : GGD plea and GGD montage + 3 audio jingles: No Plastic, Air Pollution and Save Water) in collaboration with Shri Amitabh Bachhan. MoEFCC has released the same on various media platforms viz. TV News Channels, Digital Cinemas, FM Channels, Doordarshan, Lok Sabha and Raj TV etc. .
- **Students under Eco-clubs** are implementing the Green Good Deeds (GGDs) initiative which seeks to transform the people's behaviour into Green Good Behaviour and fulfil Green Social Responsibility. A ten point agenda has been developed to implement the GGDs through Nodal agencies in State/UTs implementing the Ecoclub programme.
- **Various activities** covered under GGDs like cleanliness drives within the school campus, carry out waste segregation into biodegradable and non-biodegradable, paper re-cycling and conducting tree plantation drives etc are being implemented across the country by the students. The green attitude is visible in their actions.
- **Further GREEN GOOD DEEDS** event was successfully organised on 6.10.2018 at India International Science Festival (IISF) 2018 held at Indira Gandhi Prathishthan, Lucknow. Event was inaugurated by Dr. A.K. Mehta Additional Secretary, MoEFCC. Exhibition showcasing the success stories under Ecoclub programme. Around 200 Ecoclub students from Uttar Pradesh participated in the Drawing and Essay competitions.

Clean Air Campaign:

- **Minister for Environment**, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan launched a joint campaign, with Delhi Government, NDMC, CPCB and other municipal agencies, for clean air in Delhi from 10-23 Feb 2018. The campaign is aimed to sensitise ground-level functionaries and general public to enforce the habit of environmental protection.
- **66 teams were** formed led jointly by one officer each from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and one officer from the State Government of Delhi. These officers were assisted by officers from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and respective municipal corporations.
- **The teams were** provided with check lists focussed on activities on mitigation of pollution, including effective measures for dust mitigation, solid waste management and prevention of garbage burning. Keeping in view of the success of the campaign, second round was also held for 10 days in November 2018.

Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP)

- **In order to skill youth** in environment, forest and wildlife sectors and enable them to be gainfully employed/ self-employed, MoEF&CC launched a Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) in June, 2017 on a pilot basis. The programme is now being scaled to an all India level.
- **More than 30 skilling programmes** are being conducted during 2018-19, covering diverse fields-pollution monitoring (air/ water/ soil), STP/ETP/CETP operation, waste management, forest management, water budgeting & auditing, conservation of river dolphins, wildlife management, para taxonomy, including PBRs, mangroves conservation, bamboo management and livelihood generation.
- **During 2018-19 from August till date**, 944 candidates have successfully completed the different skilling courses. Currently, 568 candidates are enrolled in various ongoing courses.
- **The objective of creating a pool** of Master Trainers during 2018-19 is also being met as 283 of the successful trainees have offered to be Master Trainers, who would skill more youth across the country in various skill sets, related to environment, forest and wildlife.
- **A mobile app** giving information about the training programme being conducted under GSDP, list of the Institutes offering these programme and other details has been also launched.

Green (Harit) Diwali

- **undertook a “Harit Diwali - Swasth Diwali”** campaign which was launched on 22.10.2018 in MoEF&CC wherein around 500 students from schools in Delhi/NCR region participated. Advisories were issued to Nodal agencies implementing the Eco-club programme to celebrate environmental-friendly Diwali include cleaning of houses, renovating and decorating homes with diyas, lighting up candles, lamps; donating clothes/books to needy; making colourful rangoli etc.
- **Reclassification of Bamboo & Removal from Category of Tree:** The Government of India has made concerted efforts to promote bamboo cultivation right from enabling regulatory provision, to supporting the bamboo plantation on a large scale by launching newly restructured National Bamboo Mission with a budget outlay of Rs 1290 crore.
- **The amendment in Indian Forest Act, 1927**, will facilitate the inter-state movement of bamboo, as there will be no requirement of permit during transit from one State to another. It will ultimately result in reducing the gap of availability of resources from bamboo-surplus states to bamboo-deficit states. As a result, both producers and consumers will be benefitted.

Climate Change:

- **The Climate Change Division of Ministry** of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) looks after the issues related to climate change including the international negotiations and domestic policies and actions. India is a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol. The Division is also responsible for submission of National Communications (NATCOMs) and the Biennial Update Reports (BURs) to UNFCCC.
- **Several domestic programmes/ schemes** have been initiated in the recent years for addressing climate change. Some key initiatives include the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change (NAFCC), Climate Change Action Programme (CCAP) and State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) among others. In order to create and strengthen the scientific and analytical capacity for assessment of climate change in the country, different studies have also been initiated under CCAP.
- **During the year 2018**, many important bilateral and multilateral meetings and negotiations on climate change were held in the run up to the 24th Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (COP-24), in which Hon'ble Minister, EF&CC and senior officials of the Ministry participated.
- **The Ministry** hosted international meetings of the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) on 1st and 2nd November 2018 and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) countries on 19th -20th November 2018. The meeting has helped in strengthening and securing common interest and positions of the developing countries in the run up to COP-24 to the UNFCCC.
- **Twenty Fourth Conference of Parties** (COP-24) in Katowice, Poland was successful in adopting Paris Agreement Work Programme. The conference was significant one which focused on other key issues including the conclusion of 2018 Facilitative Talanoa Dialogue and the stocktake of Pre-2020 actions implementation and ambition.

- **India engaged positively** and constructively in all the negotiations while protecting India's key interests including recognition of different starting points of developed and developing countries; flexibilities for developing countries and consideration of principles including equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC). India re-affirmed its commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation and its image has undergone a positive change
- **An India Pavilion** was also setup during Twenty Fourth Conference of Parties (COP 24) of UNFCCC held in Katowice, Poland from December 3rd to 14th, 2018. The theme of pavilion this year was 'One World One Sun One Grid' based on an ambitious target set by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during the first assembly of the International Solar Alliance on October 2018 that 40 percent of its installed power capacity will be from non-fossil fuels by 2030.
- **Eminent dignitaries** from the other participating countries of Japan, Qatar, Austria, Maldives, UK and the host country Poland visited the India Pavilion and gave remarkable feedback. The India Pavilion also became a platform to bring together 43 different stakeholder institutions including Central Ministries, State Governments/ Departments, Think Tanks, Civil Society Organisations, etc. to showcase their climate change action taken in various sectors through 20 side events. A footfall of about 14-15,000 people at India pavilion during the course of COP-24.
- **In 2018, under National Adaptation Fund** on Climate Change (NAFCC), a total amount of Rs. 42.16 crore has been released to seven (07) ongoing projects to support adaptation activities in Rajasthan, Sikkim, H.P., Tamil Nadu, Mizoram, Manipur and Kerala. Till date 27 projects (including one regional project) have been approved at a total cost of Rs. 673.63 crore and Rs. 369 crore have been sanctioned.
- **Under Climate Change Action Programme (CCAP)** scheme, a total amount of Rs. 2.15 crore has been released for capacity building in Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Telangana and two demonstration projects in Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh respectively. Ministry is also implementing two scientific programmes under CCAP namely, National Carbonaceous Aerosols Programme (NCAP) and Long Term Ecological Observatories (LTEO).
- **India will be submitting its Second Biennial Update Report (BUR)** to UNFCCC in late December 2018 to comply with the reporting obligations under the convention. The report among others, contains information on the national GHG inventory for the year 2014.

Some Other important Initiatives/Policy decisions during - 2018

- **A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee** on Environment Pollution of Rivers including Spring-fed Rivers and its impact on ecology was held.
- **The 1st India- Morocco Joint Working Group** meeting was held in February, 2018 to serve as a platform for both the countries to explore different areas in the field of Environment for cooperation.
- **A new Indo-German Technical Cooperation** project on Human-Wildlife conflict mitigation in India was conceptualized. The project is commissioned by Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and is being implemented by MoE&CC.
- **OM dated 27.4.2018 regarding exemption** from public consultation for the projects/ activities located within the Industrial Estates/ Parks was issued.
- **Powers have been delegated to concerned SEIAs and SEACs** to appraise and accord Environmental Clearance for Category B violation proposals.
- **Vide the notification dated 6th April, 2018** a six-month opportunity for all mining project which were granted EC under the EIA Notification 1994 but not obtained EC for expansion/ modernization/amendment given in the light of order passed by Hon'ble Supreme Court.
- **Prior Environment Clearance for all minerals** (Major and Minor) irrespective of size of mine lease has been made mandatory for Aravali Region.
- **Under National River Conservation Plan (NRCP)**, administrative approval for expenditure of Rs. 94.66 Crores has been granted.
- **Cabinet note for adoption of a strategy** for increasing tree cover outside forests under tripartite agreement between land owning agencies, concerned State Govts. And public and private organizations for taking up plantation on non- forest government land has been drafted and circulated for consultation.
- **Cabinet note for guidelines for public participation** in an afforestation of degraded forest have been circulated for consultation.
- **An MoU between MoEF&CC, GOI and Ministry of Agriculture**, Rural Development and Environment, Govt. Of the Republic of Cyprus on cooperation in the areas of environment was signed.
- **The National Action Plan of the Central Asian Flyway**, one of the nine flyways in the world, has been launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change which will enable effective management of the migratory birds, connected wetlands and the entire ecosystem associated with it.
- **In order to reduce cost, time and for streamlining** activities of Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife(SCNBWL), the Wildlife Division has initiated video-conferencing of all issues related to SCNBWL. It has resulted in prompt perusal of issues related to Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife.

- **In order to train the Veterinary doctors in wildlife disease management**, the Ministry has initiated a training course for the Veterinary doctors of the country in wildlife disease management at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izzatnagar, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh.
- **To stop burning of crop residue that may lead to higher level of air pollution** in Delhi NCR especially during adverse meteorological conditions in early winter in North India, the Central Government has approved a new Central Sector Scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for in-situ management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi for the period from 2018-19 and 2019-20 with an outlay of Rs. 1151.80 crore. This year's allocation of Central funds of Rs. 591.65 crore has been released to the concerned States except Delhi.
- **A web-based portal currently provides real-time AQI, air quality status**, information on likely health impacts associated with AQI values for the cities. Air quality bulletins are also issued on daily basis.
- **The Central Government had notified a Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)** on 12th January 2017 for Delhi and NCR, which comprises measures such as prohibition on entry of trucks into Delhi; ban on construction activities, introduction of odd and even scheme for private vehicles, shutting of schools, closure of brick kilns, hot mix plants and stone crushers; ban on diesel generator sets, garbage burning in landfills and plying of visibly polluting vehicles etc. The nature, scope and rigor of measures to be taken is linked to levels of pollution viz. severe plus or emergency, severe, very poor, moderate to poor and moderate, after due consideration by authorities concerned. The actions are to be implemented in the entire NCR.
- **A comprehensive set of directions have been issued under section 18 (1) (b)** of Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1986 for implementation of 42/31 measures to mitigate air pollution in major cities including Delhi and NCR cities comprising of control and mitigation measures related to vehicular emissions, re-suspension of road dust and other fugitive emissions, bio-mass/municipal solid waste burning, industrial pollution, construction and demolition activities, and other general steps.
- **Notification of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Pet Shop) Rules, 2018** to make pet shops accountable and prevent the cruelty incurred to animals there.
- **In the financial year 2018-19 funds earmarked under the NPCA scheme for conservation and management of wetlands and lakes is Rs. 66 crore.** A total of Rs. 34.22 crore is allotted for conservation and management of 5 lakes in 4 states and Rs. 27.344 crore for 35 wetlands in 12 States & 1 UT during the time-frame of 01.01.18 - 31.12.18. Also, an amount of Rs. 41.086 lakh has been allotted for R&D and other activities related to the conservation and management of wetlands and lakes under NPCA.
- **WCCB received UNEP Award:** Excellent work done in combating trans-boundary environmental crime by WCCB has been recognized by United Nation Environment Programme by awarding Asia Environment Enforcement Awards, 2018.
- **The Asia Environment Enforcement Awards** publicly recognize and celebrate excellence in enforcement by government officials and institutions/teams combating trans-boundary environmental crime in Asia. WCCB has been conferred this award in the Innovation category. WCCB has adopted innovative enforcement techniques that have dramatically increased enforcement of trans-boundary environmental crimes in India.
- **Notably it has developed an online Wildlife Crime Database Management System** to get real time data in order to help analyze trends in crime and devise effective measures to prevent and detect wildlife crimes across India. In order to involve the public in the fight against wildlife crime, WCCB has also developed a scheme to enroll willing persons as WCCB Volunteers.



Year End review: Department of Space

- **Announcement of Manned mission:** While addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 72nd Independence Day, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi announced that India has resolved to send manned spacecraft to the space by 2022 and India will be the fourth country to do this.
- **So far, only the USA, Russia and China** have launched human spaceflight missions. While addressing a press conference in New Delhi on 28th August, ISRO Chairman, Dr. K. Sivan said that Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has the capabilities to accomplish this task by the given timeframe.
- **ISRO has developed some critical technologies** like re-entry mission capability, crew escape system, crew module configuration, thermal protection system, deceleration and floatation system, sub-systems of life support system etc. required for this programme.
- **Some of these technologies** have been demonstrated successfully through the Space Capsule Recovery Experiment (SRE-2007), Crew module Atmospheric Reentry Experiment (CARE-2014) and Pad Abort Test (2018). These technologies will enable ISRO in accomplishing the programme objectives in a short span of 4 years.
- **Launches by ISRO**
 - ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, in its forty second flight, PSLV-C40 successfully launched the 710 kg Cartosat-2 Series Remote Sensing Satellite along with 30 co-passenger satellites on 12th January, 2018, from Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota. The 11 kg INS-1C and the 100 kg class Microsat were the two Indian co-passenger satellites of Cartosat-2. The 28 international customer satellites belonged to Canada, Finland, France, Republic of Korea, UK and the USA.
 - India's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F08)** successfully launched GSAT-6A Satellite into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) on 29th March, 2018. This was the fifth consecutive success achieved by GSLV carrying indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage. GSAT-6A is a communication satellite built by ISRO to provide mobile communication services through multi beam coverage. For this, it is equipped with S and C band transponders.
 - In its forty third flight**, ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C41 successfully launched the 1,425 kg IRNSS-1I Navigation Satellite on 12th April, 2018, from Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota. IRNSS-1I is the latest member of the 'Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)' system. NavIC, also known as Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide position information in the Indian region and 1,500 km around the Indian mainland.
 - The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C42)** of ISRO successfully launched two satellites -- NovaSAR and S1-4-- from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota on 16th September, 2018. The satellites belong to UK-based Surrey Satellite Technology Limited (SSTL), which has a contract with Antrix Corporation Ltd, the commercial arm of ISRO. NovaSAR carries S-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and an Automatic Identification Receiver payloads. The satellite applications include forestry mapping, land use and ice cover monitoring, flood and disaster monitoring and maritime missions. It will be operated from SSTL's Spacecraft Operations Centre in Guildford, UK. S1-4 is a high resolution earth observation satellite meant for surveying resources, environment monitoring, urban management and disaster monitoring.
 - ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C43)** successfully launched 31 satellites from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) on 29th November, 2018, in Sriharikota. HysIS is an earth observation satellite built around ISRO's Mini Satellite2 (IMS-2) bus weighing about 380kg. The mission life of the satellite is five years. The primary goal of HysIS is to study the earth's surface in both the visible, near infrared and shortwave infrared regions of the electromagnetic spectrum. HysIS had the company of one micro and 29 nano-satellites from eight countries, including Australia (1), Canada (1), Columbia (1), Finland (1), Malaysia (1), Netherlands (1), Spain (1) and USA (23).
 - India's GSAT-29 communication** satellite was successfully launched by the second developmental flight of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle MarkIII (GSLV MkIII-D2) today from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota, on 14th November, 2018.
 - GSLV Mk III is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle** developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). GSAT-29 is a multiband, multi-beam communication satellite, intended to serve as test bed for several new and critical technologies. Its Ku-band and Ka-band payloads are configured to cater to the communication requirements of users including those from remote areas especially from Jammu & Kashmir and North-Eastern regions of India.
 - ISRO's heaviest and most-advanced high throughput** communication satellite GSAT-11 was successfully launched from the Spaceport in French Guiana during the early hours on 5th December, 2018. GSAT-11 will act as a forerunner to all future high throughput communication satellites. The 5,854-kg GSAT-11 will provide high data rate connectivity to users of Indian mainland and islands through 32 user beams in Ku-band and 8 hub beams in Ka-band.
 - ISRO's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F11)** successfully launched the communication satellite GSAT-7A from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota on 19th December, 2018. GSAT-7A is the heaviest satellite launched by GSLV with an indigenously developed cryogenic stage. GSAT-7A is an advanced communication satellite with a Gregorian Antenna and many other new technologies.

- **On 6th June, 2018, the Union Cabinet** chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the PSLV Continuation Programme (Phase 6) and funding of thirty PSLV operational flights under the Programme. The Programme will also meet the launch requirement of satellites for Earth observation, Navigation and Space Sciences.
- **This will also ensure the continuity of production** in Indian industry. The total fund requirement is Rs. 6131.00 Crores and includes the cost of thirty PSLV vehicles, essential facility augmentation, Programme Management and Launch Campaign.
- **The Cabinet also approved funding** for the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark-III (GSLV Mk-III) continuation programme (Phase-I) consisting of ten (10) GSLV (Mk-III) flights, at a total estimated cost of Rs. 4338.20 crores.

Discovery of a sub-Saturn or super-neptune size planet

- **A Team of scientists and engineers** led by Prof. Abhijit Chakraborty of Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad, discovered a sub-Saturn or super-neptune size planet (mass of about 27 Earth Mass and size of 6 Earth Radii) around a Sun-like star.
- **The planet will be known as EPIC 211945201b or K2-236b.** With this discovery, India has joined a handful of countries, which have discovered planets around stars beyond our solar system. Further, PARAS is the first of its kind spectrograph in Asia, which can measure the mass of a planet going around a star. Very few spectrographs exist around the world that can do such precise measurements.
- **Pad Abort Test successful to qualify Crew Escape System** required for Human Spaceflight The ISRO carried out Pad Abort Test successfully to qualify Crew Escape System required for Human Spaceflight, on 5th July 2018 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- **As part of the activities** for development of critical technologies for future Human Spaceflight, Pad Abort Test was carried out to demonstrate the Crew Escape System during any exigency at launch pad. The Crew Escape System is configured using specially designed quick acting solid motors that deliver a relatively large thrust to take the crew module to a safe distance.
- **Experimental data from this mission** will serve as a useful input to undertake human spaceflight programme. An amount of Rs.173.00 crores is approved for development of critical technologies including Crew Escape System.
- **Transfer of the in-house developed Li-ion cell technology** to competent Indian Industries. One of the major Centres of ISRO, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), offered to transfer the in-house developed Li-ion cell technology to competent Indian Industries on non-exclusive basis to establish Li-ion cell production facilities in the country.
- **This initiative is expected to enable Zero Emission Policy of India** and accelerate the development of indigenous electric vehicle industry.

MoU between ISRO and Central University of Jammu

- **ISRO signed an MoU** with the Central University of Jammu (CUJ) in Jammu for setting up of the Satish Dhawan Center for Space Science in the University, on 11th October, 2018. Another MoU was signed between CUJ and the Central Scientific Instruments Organization (CSIR-CSIO) to create awareness about space research and to motivate young minds to take up research related to space, astronomy, geology, atmospheric sciences and related fields, a two day workshop was also inaugurated at the CUJ campus.
- **MoU between MHA and ISRO** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and ISRO, Department of Space signed a MoU in New Delhi on 20th September, 2018, for setting up of an state-of-the-art Integrated Control Room for Emergency Response (ICR-ER) in Ministry of Home Affairs. ISRO will render its technical expertise for setting up of proposed ICR-ER whereas the project will be executed under overall supervision of MHA. The proposed Control Room is expected to be established in next one-and-a-half year.
- **MoUs with foreign countries.** During the year 2018, India signed various MoUs with foreign countries. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of these MoUs. These agreements are:
- **MoU between India and Tajikistan** on Cooperation on Peaceful uses of Space Technology for Development. The MoU was signed on 8th October 2018 at Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The MoU would lead to set up a Joint Working Group, drawing members from DOS/ISRO and the State Committee of Land Management and Geodesy of Republic of Tajikistan, which will further work out the plan of action including the time-frame and the means of implementing this MoU.

- **Agreement between India and Uzbekistan** on Cooperation in the exploration and uses of Outer Space for peaceful purposes. The Agreement was signed on 1st October 2018 at New Delhi during the State visit of the President of Uzbekistan to India. The signing of the Agreement will strengthen the cooperation between India and Uzbekistan and would provide impetus to explore newer research activities and application possibilities in the field of remote sensing; satellite communication; satellite navigation; space science and exploration of outer space.
- **MoU between India and Morocco** for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The MoU was signed at New Delhi on 25th September 2018. The MoU would lead to set up a Joint Working Group, drawing members from DOS/ISRO and Royal Centre for Remote Sensing (CRTS) and the Royal Centre for Space Research and Studies (CRERS), which will further work out the plan of action including the time-frame and the means of implementing the MoU.
- **Agreement between India and Algeria** on Cooperation in the field of Space Sciences, Technologies and Applications. The Agreement was signed at Bengaluru on 19th September 2018. Signing of the Agreement will strengthen the cooperation between India and Algeria, and provide impetus to explore newer research activities and application possibilities in the field of remote sensing of the earth, satellite navigation, space science and exploration of outer space.
- **MoU between India and Brunei Darussalam** on Cooperation in the operation of Telemetry Tracking and Telecommand station for satellite and launch vehicles, and for cooperation in the field of Space Research, Science and Applications. The MoU was signed in New Delhi on 19th July 2018.
- **MoU between India and South Africa** on cooperation in the exploration and uses of outer space for peaceful purposes. The MoU was signed in Johannesburg on 26th July 2018. Signing of this MoU shall enable pursuing the potential areas of cooperation such as space science, technology and applications including remote sensing of the earth, satellite communication and satellite-based navigation; space science and planetary exploration; use of spacecraft and space systems and ground systems; and application of space technology.
- **MoU signed between India** represented by the ISRO and Oman represented by the Ministry of Transport and Communications on Cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, in February, 2018 at Muscat. This MoU shall enable the following areas of cooperation such as, space science, technology and applications including remote sensing of the earth; satellite based navigation; Space science and planetary exploration; use of spacecraft and space systems and ground system; and application of space technology.

Curative petition

- **The tragedy:** More than 3,500 people were killed instantly when poisonous gas leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal on the night of December 2-3, 1984. Thousands more have died over the years. Many more thousands have been maimed or suffer from serious health issues due to their exposure to the gas.
- **How did it happen?** There was a leakage in the water pipe and as result water entered into methyl iso cyanide(MIC) tank. Also, refrigeration system was not working to cool MIC and prevent chemical reaction. Due to this, exothermic reaction took place releasing large amount of heat and the volume of gas increased and a cloud of gases phosgene, carbon monoxide and MIC started coming out. As it was very spontaneous and rapidly it spread and soon a very dense cloud was formed over the city of Bhopal exposing half a million people.
- **What is curative petition?** It is the last judicial resort available for redressal of grievances in court which is normally decided by judges in-chamber. It is only in rare cases that such petitions are given an open-court hearing.
- **The concept of curative petition** was first evolved by the Supreme Court of India in the matter of Rupa Ashok Hurra vs. Ashok Hurra and Anr. (2002) where the question was whether an aggrieved person is entitled to any relief against the final judgement/order of the Supreme Court, after dismissal of a review petition.
- **The Supreme Court** in the said case held that in order to prevent abuse of its process and to cure gross miscarriage of justice, it may reconsider its judgements in exercise of its inherent powers. For this purpose, the Court has devised what has been termed as a "curative" petition.
- **To entertain the curative petitions, the Supreme Court has laid down certain specific conditions:** The petitioner will have to establish that there was a genuine violation of principles of natural justice and fear of the bias of the judge and judgement that adversely affected him.
- **The petition shall state** specifically that the grounds mentioned had been taken in the review petition and that it was dismissed by circulation. The petition is to be sent to the three senior most judges and judges of the bench who passed the judgement affecting the petition, if available.
- **If the majority of the judges** on the above bench agree that the matter needs hearing, then it would be sent to the same bench (as far as possible) and the court could impose "exemplary costs" to the petitioner if his plea lacks merit.
- **Article- 137 of the Constitution** subjects to the provisions of the guidelines made under Article 145, by which it is clear that the Supreme Court has the ability to review any judgment declared by it.

India to participate in PISA 2021

- **The students will be selected by PISA** through random sampling. The schools run by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and schools in the UT of Chandigarh would be participating.
- **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.

Non-communicable diseases

- **Background:** Containing the NCDs has been listed by the WHO as its health goal for this year along with reducing mortality related to air pollution and climate change, global influenza pandemic etc.
- **Key observations:** Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, are collectively responsible for over 70% of all deaths worldwide, or 41 million people. These include 15 million people dying prematurely, aged between 30 and 69. One third of these deaths are premature and occur before the age of 70, affecting economically productive individuals.
- **The four 'major' NCDs** are caused, to a large extent, by four modifiable behavioural risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, insufficient physical activity and harmful use of alcohol. The NCDs disproportionately affect the poor, impoverish families, and place a growing burden on health care systems.
- **What needs to be done?** Consuming fibre and whole grains can reduce health risks from non-communicable diseases such as heart disease. Eating fibre-rich foods reduces the incidence of coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and colorectal cancer by 16% to 24%.
- **A higher fibre intake** is also associated with lower bodyweight, systolic blood pressure and total cholesterol when compared with lower intake. Doctors also recommend — eat less and enjoy your food by eating slowly, fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables, avoid oversized portions which causes weight gain, at least half of your grains should be whole grains, limit consumption of food high in trans fats.
- **What are NCDs?** Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, tend to be of long duration and are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behaviours factors.
- **The main types of NCDs** are cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes.
- **What are the socioeconomic impacts of NCDs?** NCDs threaten progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a target of reducing premature deaths from NCDs by one-third by 2030.
- **Poverty is closely linked with NCDs.** The rapid rise in NCDs is predicted to impede poverty reduction initiatives in low-income countries, particularly by increasing household costs associated with health care. Vulnerable and socially disadvantaged people get sicker and die sooner than people of higher social positions, especially because they are at greater risk of being exposed to harmful products, such as tobacco, or unhealthy dietary practices, and have limited access to health services.

- **In low-resource settings**, health-care costs for NCDs quickly drain household resources. The exorbitant costs of NCDs, including often lengthy and expensive treatment and loss of breadwinners, force millions of people into poverty annually and stifle development.

New Delhi superbug gene reaches the Arctic

- **Soil samples taken in Svalbard** — a Norwegian archipelago between mainland Norway and the North Pole — have now confirmed the spread of blaNDM-1 (called New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1) into the High Arctic. Carried in the gut of animals and people, blaNDM-1 and other ARGs were found in Arctic soils that were likely spread through the faecal matter of birds, other wildlife and human visitors to the area.
- **What is a superbug?** A superbug, also called multi-resistant, is a bacterium that carries several resistance genes. These are resistant to multiple antibiotics and are able to survive even after exposure to one or more antibiotics.
- **What causes them to mutate like that?** Like any living organism, bacteria can mutate as they multiply. Also like any living organism, bacteria have a strong evolutionary drive to survive. So, over time, a select few will mutate in particular ways that make them resistant to antibiotics. Then, when antibiotics are introduced, only the bacteria that can resist that treatment can survive to multiply further, proliferating the line of drug-resistant bugs.
- **Why is Antibiotic Resistance a Big Deal?** The discovery of antibiotics less than a century ago was a turning point in public health that has saved countless lives. Although antibiotic resistance develops naturally with normal bacterial mutation, humans are speeding it up by using antibiotics improperly. According to a research, now, 2 million people a year in the US develop antibiotic-resistant infections, and 23,000 of them die of those infections.
- **Why is the medical community worried?** Basically, superbugs are becoming more powerful and widespread than ever. Medical experts are afraid that we're one step away from deadly, untreatable infections, since the mcr-1 E.coli is resistant to that last-resort antibiotic Colistin. Antibiotic-resistance is passed relatively easily from one bacteria to the next, since it is transmitted by way of loose genetic material that most bacteria have in common.
- **The World Health Organization (WHO)** is afraid of a post-antibiotic world, where loads of bacteria are superbugs. Already, infections like tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and pneumonia are becoming harder to treat with typical antibiotics.
- **What Can We Do?** First step would be to limit antibiotic use. If a patient has a virus, for instance, an antibiotic won't work, so doctors shouldn't prescribe antibiotics even if the patient insists. And when patients do need antibiotics, it's important to make sure they take the full course to kill off every last infection-causing germ. Otherwise the strong survive, mutate, and spread. As a society, curbing antibiotic use in healthy animals used in human food production is another important step.

Tackling climate change from a security perspective

- **However, India** has questioned the rush at the UN to declare climate change an international security issue.
- **India has pointed** out the following pitfalls arising from viewing actions to tackle climate change from a security perspective:
- **Declaring so potentially** give the Security Council the right to take action on it. A "mere decision of the Council" to take over enforcement of climate change action will disrupt the Paris Agreement and multilateral efforts to find solutions.
- **UNSC may not also be** suitable to lead a global response to a problem that requires collaboration of all countries and stakeholders. A security approach to a critical challenge facing humanity may in fact hinder the global collective effort.
- **A securitised approach** could also end up pitting countries into a competition when the most productive approach is cooperation. Thinking in security terms usually engenders overly militarised solutions to problems, which inherently require non-military responses to resolve. It brings the wrong actors to the table.
- **Also, climate-related disasters** may not amenable to the processes and solutions used to tackle threats to international peace and security. Mitigation and adaptation strategies may not be fulfilled through enforcement action.
- **Positive sides:** Since international peace and security considerations lead to increased focus on issues, defining climate change as a security challenge could lead to an upgrade in attention and resources devoted to addressing it. Securitising climate change may also help heighten public awareness and help surmounting opposition to addressing the issue.

- **Why regard climate change as a national security threat?** Climate change has “a multitude of security impacts” with global warming records broken in 20 of the last 22 years. Few say that there is no bigger security threat than climate change because it endangers the very existence of countries like Maldives. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s report in October predicting more heat waves, heavier rain events, higher sea levels and severe damage to agriculture represents “a security risk for the entire world.”
- **Also, the global average** greenhouse gas concentrations of carbon dioxide – which causes global warming – continued rising to record levels in 2018-2019. The last time the Earth experienced similar concentration of carbon dioxide was 3-5 million years ago, when the temperature was 2-3 degrees Celsius warmer and sea level was 10-20 metres higher than now.
- **Way ahead:** Climate change is not a threat to international peace and security and should only be discussed in specific cases where it is a risk factor. However, enough attention needs to be given as World Economic Forum has ranked extreme weather, natural disasters, climate change and water crises as the top four existential threats in its new Global Risks Report 2019.
- **Key focus areas should be:** Developing stronger analytical capacity with integrated risk assessment frameworks. Collecting stronger evidence base so good practices on climate risk prevention and management can be replicated in the field.
- **Building and reinforcing** partnerships to leverage existing capacities within and outside the UN system.

Delhi To Introduce MSP based on Swaminathan Commission Report

- **Background:** A three-member committee was formed in December to study the MS Swaminathan Commission's report. The committee has submitted its report. The report will be put before experts for suggestions. Once the MSP is finalised, the government will hold meetings with farmers, seeking their views and thereafter it will be sent to the Cabinet.
- **The Swaminathan Commission- Inception:** The National Commission on Farmers (NCF), with MS Swaminathan as its chairman, was formed in 2004.
- **Aim: To come up** with a system for sustainability in farming system and make it more profitable and cost competitive in farm commodities. To also recommend measures for credit and other marketing steps.
- **The commission submitted five reports** between December 2004 and October 2006. The fifth and final report is considered the most crucial as it contains suggestions for the agriculture sector as a whole.
- **The Commission's observations:** Farmers need an assured access to and control over basic resources of farming. These include land, water, fertilizers and pesticides, credit and crop insurance. Knowledge of farming technology and markets is also key. Farmers' concerns and other agriculture-related issues must be implemented in the concurrent list, to make it a high priority for both state and central governments.
- **Key recommendations of the Commission:** Distribute ceiling-surplus and wasteland among farmers, prevent the non-agricultural use of farmland, secure grazing rights and seasonal forest access to forest tribals. Establish a National Land Use Advisory Service, which would link land use decisions with ecological and marketing factors of season and geography-specific basis.
- **Reform irrigation resources** and its distribution among farmers. Use rainwater harvesting, water level recharging to increase water supply. Spread outreach of institutional credit by reducing crop loan interest rates, provide a moratorium on debt recovery, agricultural risk fund and a separate Kisan Credit Card for women farmers.
- **To address the growing farmer suicides**, provide affordable health insurance at primary health centres in rural areas. The recommendations included an extension of national rural health mission to suicide-prone areas.
- **Restructuring of microfinance policies**, covering all crops by insurance and social security net for support were also sought. Give farmers a minimum support price at 50% profit above the cost of production classified as C2 by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- **WHAT IS C2?** The CACP defines production costs of crops under three categories — A2, A2+FL (standing for family labour) and C2. A2 is the actual paid-out expenses incurred by farmers — in cash and kind — on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, hired labour, fuel, irrigation and other inputs from outside.
- **A2+FL includes A2 cost plus** an imputed value of unpaid family labour. C2 is the most comprehensive definition of production cost of crops as it also accounts for the rentals or interest loans, owned land and fixed capital assets over and above A2+FL.

‘India can’t handle more big cats’

- **Notable points:** India's current capacity to host tigers ranges from 2,500-3,000 tigers. Officially, India had 2,226 tigers as of 2014. An ongoing census is expected to reveal an update to these numbers.
- **25-35% of India's** tigers now lived outside protected reserves. Recent attempts at translocating tigers to unpopulated reserves, such as Satkosia in Orissa, have ended badly, with one of the tigers dying.
- **Main Challenges:** Dwindling core forest as well as the shrinking of tiger corridors. Poaching and man-animal conflict.
- **Way ahead:** India has the maximum number of wild tigers in the world (70% of tigers in the world are in India). Therefore, it needs a fool-proof plan to manage the growing number of big cats.
- **Given the low** availability of prey in some reserves, the country should now concentrate on developing vast tracts of potential tiger habitat that can be used to improve prey density, develop tiger corridors and therefore support a much larger population.
- **International Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation:** The 3rd Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation was recently inaugurated in New Delhi. Third in a series of Stock Taking Conferences, this is the second to be held in India after 2012 and is expected to have wide-ranging discussions on the status of the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) by the 13 tiger range countries besides deliberations on combating wildlife trafficking.
- **13 Tiger range** States—Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **The conference is being** hosted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in close collaboration with the Global Tiger Forum which is an International, Intergovernmental Organization for conserving tigers in the world.
- **Additional facts:** During the St. Petersburg declaration in 2010, tiger range countries had resolved to double tiger numbers across their range by 2022.

Malaysia not to host 2019 World Para Swimming Championships:

- **Context:** Malaysia was stripped of the right to host the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships for threatening to refuse to allow Israeli athletes to take part in the event. International Paralympic Committee said.
- **India replaces Japan to be world's second largest steel producer:** India has replaced Japan as the world's second-largest steel producing country, only behind China, which is the largest producer of crude steel accounting for more than 51 per cent of production, as per the latest report by World Steel Association.

Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Fund:

- **Context:** Three former Tata Group executives in partnership with Quantum Advisors will launch a \$1 billion Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Fund.
- **About the Fund:** The Fund will invest in Indian companies that value the environment, society and corporate governance to the core. The proposed equal joint venture (JV) would mobilise funds from long-term foreign investors such as pension funds, sovereign wealth funds and family offices of high networth individuals (HNIs) who value ESG.
- **The fund will** aim to drive higher ESG performance in Indian corporates and it will adopt an engaged, private equity approach to public markets investing, with a focus on working with companies willing to recognize the long-term advantages of actively adopting ESG standards of excellence.
- **Significance:** There is pressing need for such a fund in India as there are concerns on standards of corporate governance in the country and Indian companies will need to play a central role to help achieve global climate change targets.

Summary of Important Editorials: Shot in the arm- SC upholds Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code:

- **Context:** Supreme Court has upheld the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code's constitutional validity in its 'entirety', and rejected petitions challenging the bankruptcy laws, in a major setback to defaulting promoters hoping for a chance to remain in control of their firms.
- **Know about the IBC:** The IBC was enacted in 2016, replacing a host of laws, with the aim to streamline and speed up the resolution process of failed businesses.
- **The code applies** to companies and individuals. It provides for a time-bound process to resolve insolvency. When a default in repayment occurs, creditors gain control over debtor's assets and must take decisions to resolve insolvency within a 180-day period.
- **The Code also** consolidates provisions of the current legislative framework to form a common forum for debtors and creditors of all classes to resolve insolvency.
- **The Code creates various institutions to facilitate resolution of insolvency. These are as follows:** Insolvency Professionals: A specialised cadre of licensed professionals is proposed to be created. These professionals will administer the resolution process, manage the assets of the debtor, and provide information for creditors to assist them in decision making.
- **Insolvency Professional Agencies:** The insolvency professionals will be registered with insolvency professional agencies. The agencies conduct examinations to certify the insolvency professionals and enforce a code of conduct for their performance.
- **Information Utilities:** Creditors will report financial information of the debt owed to them by the debtor. Such information will include records of debt, liabilities and defaults.
- **Adjudicating authorities:** The proceedings of the resolution process will be adjudicated by the National Companies Law Tribunal (NCLT), for companies; and the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT), for individuals. The duties of the authorities will include approval to initiate the resolution process, appoint the insolvency professional, and approve the final decision of creditors.
- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board:** The Board will regulate insolvency professionals, insolvency professional agencies and information utilities set up under the Code. The Board will consist of representatives of Reserve Bank of India, and the Ministries of Finance, Corporate Affairs and Law.

Salient features of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code- how it work?

- **The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016** is a comprehensive law and covers all individuals, companies, Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) and partnership firms.
- **The adjudicating authority is National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** for companies and LLPs and Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) for individuals and partnership firms.
- **The insolvency resolution process** can be initiated by any of the stakeholders of the firm: firm/ debtors/ creditors/ employees. If the adjudicating authority accepts, an Insolvency resolution professional or IP is appointed.
- **The power of the management** and the board of the firm is transferred to the committee of creditors (CoC). They act through the IP. The IP has to decide whether to revive the company (insolvency resolution) or liquidate it (liquidation).
- **If they decide to revive**, they have to find someone willing to buy the firm. The creditors also have to accept a significant reduction in debt. The reduction is known as a haircut.
- **They invite open bids** from the interested parties to buy the firm. They choose the party with the best resolution plan, that is acceptable to the majority of the creditors (75 % in CoC), to take over the management of the firm.

Significance of the SC's latest judgment:

- **The endorsement** of the law and its provisions by the Supreme Court would come as a boost to the government which pushed for a modern bankruptcy law in the first half of its term and managed to get an exit mechanism which would help the reallocation of capital and ease the huge debt burden of banks in India.
- **In the working of the code**, the flow of resources to the commercial sector in India has increased exponentially as a result of financial debts being repaid, the Supreme Court said.
- **Crucially**, the judgement upheld Section 29A of the code. The section specifies a broad range of criteria that would disqualify potential bidders from bidding for assets undergoing the corporate insolvency resolution process and, among other things, bars promoters of a company facing insolvency proceedings from bidding to regain its control.
- **Performance of IBC:** It has been an effective tool for creditors, with a threat to refer a case under the insolvency law helping force many debtors to come to the negotiating table and reinforcing what former RBI Governor, Raghuram Rajan, had famously said about promoters having no divine right. A measure of the success of this law will be a rising graph of cases of corporate debtors being resolved.
- **Challenges present and measures to address them:** The major worry of the law now is the failure in many cases to stick to the prescribed timeline of 180 to 270 days to firm up a resolution plan with elaborate hearings at NCLT benches. Such delay goes against the very *raison d'être* of the law which is to ensure a swift resolution or closure and thus lower the risk for banks and the government arising from a rising pile of bad debts and the subsequent need to recapitalise state-owned lenders.
- **It is important** that these timelines are adhered to. Over time, the NCLT may be better tuned to these kind of summary proceedings with capacity building and training of professionals.
- **Way ahead:** With the Supreme Court now upholding the law barring promoters of defaulting companies from buying back the stressed assets, we can perhaps look to quicker resolutions of bad debts. This is no small matter given that Indian banks have among the world's lost ratios when it comes to non-performing assets or bad loans, and the twin balance sheet problem— where there is stress on both the lenders' and borrowers' books—is one of the biggest elephants in the room.
- **The Supreme Court's** ruling, then, is a welcome one that should circumvent efforts by vested interests to try and stymie the revival of debt-laden companies, and will go a long way in enhancing India's stature as a good place to do business in.



Year End Review 2018 – Ministry of Shipping

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

PORTS 1.1 Ports in India handle 90% by volume and 70% by value of India's external trade.

- **1.2 Capacity and Traffic** In order to meet the ever increasing trade requirements of the country, the focus has been on the infrastructure development and capacity enhancement of the Ports. Over the years the cargo handling capacity of the major ports has been growing steadily as under:
- **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust** 1.4 Award of projects and investment More than 50 Projects with an investment of over Rs. 10000 cr. and involving capacity addition of 90 MTPA are targeted for award during 2018-19. This is as against the 27 Projects were awarded during 2017-18, , involving an investment of Rs. 4146.73 crore and additional capacity of 21.93 MTPA created.
- **1.5 Improvement in efficiency parameters** While increasing the capacity of major ports, Ministry of Shipping has been striving to improve their operational efficiencies through policy interventions, procedural changes and mechanization. As a result key efficiency parameters i.e Average Turnaround Time and Average Output Per Ship Berth have improved considerably as shown below.
- **1.6 Policy initiatives** The achievement of the Major Ports in terms of capacity augmentation, improved operational efficiency and higher operating surplus has been made possible due to certain pro-active policy initiatives taken by the Ministry of Shipping as explained below.
- **The Model Concession Agreement** has been amended with a view to obviate the problems being faced in execution of PPP Projects on account of certain provisions of the present MCA, in order to enhance confidence of investors and make the investments in the Port Sector attractive.
- **The tariff guidelines** were revised to provide flexibility to port operators to align the tariff closer to market tariff subject to achievement of certain performance standards.

- **100% FDI is being allowed** in PPP Projects in the Port Sector. A new Major Ports Authorities Bill to replace existing Major Port Trusts Act 1963 to provide greater autonomy and modernization of institutional structure is under consideration and has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 16.12.2016. This is awaiting consideration and passing by the Lok Sabha.
- **v. Revised guidelines** have been issued to all the Major Ports for moving away from the practice of parking their surplus funds solely in the Public Sector Banks and investing their pension /provident/gratuity fund and surplus funds in accordance with guidelines of Ministry of Labour and Employment and Department of Public Enterprises, consistent with the provisions of Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.

1.7 Ease of Doing Business

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

Major Initiatives/Achievements during 2018

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

- **Paradip Port Trust The 2nd Major Port after** Deendayal Port (Kandla) to achieve the milestone of handling 100 MT of cargo during 2017-18. Created an all time record by successfully completing movement of 27 Vessels within 20 Hrs. i.e. from 0600 hrs on 13th October, 2018 to 0200 hrs on 14th October, 2018. On 29th October, 2018 introduced possibly first time in India, the Mediterranean Mooring Method to discharge edible oil from "MT Delfine" without using the berth.
- **VOCPT There was no night navigation** at the shallow water berth at VOCPT due to constraint in the available depth. The construction of Coastal berth along with dredging near the jetty and approaches were carried out during the month of April 2018. Subsequently with the lighting arrangement in the berth, the night navigation of shallow Water Berth for docking/un-docking was allowed from June, 2018.
- **Vishakhapatnam Port projects worth Rs. 1062 crore** were inaugurated and foundation stone for port connectivity projects worth Rs. 679 crore were laid at Visakhapatnam on 13th July, 2018. These included upgradation of iron ore handling facility at Outer Harbour of Vizagport, Construction of Grade Separator from H-7 area to Port Connectivity Road, by-passing convent junction, under Sagarmala and Development of 12.7 km road connectivity to VPT from Shreelanagar Junction to Anakapalli-Sabbavaram/Pendurti- Anandapuram road (NH 16).
- **Kolkata For the first time at Kolkata Port Trust**, a Cape Size vessel M.V. Samjohn Solidarity carrying 1,64,928 MT of Dry Bulk (Coal) made a call at Sandheads Anchorage on 17.10.2018. The vessel discharged around 1 lakh MT of Coal on barges by two Floating Cranes; the entire cargo being discharged was brought to Floating Jetty at Haldia for discharge.
- **vi Storage charges** of the PPP Projects at Major Ports came under stress due to high Storage Charges. A committee under Chairman, Indian Ports Association (IPA) considered the issues. Based on the recommendations made by the said committee a methodology has been worked out for dealing with such abnormal storage charges and bring the stressed projects on track. Guidelines in this regard have been issued to the Major Ports on 11.07.2018.
- **Utilization of Surplus funds** per instructions issued by MoS in February, 2009, surplus funds were being invested by the Major ports in the Public Sector Banks (PSBs). The practice of the ports parking their surplus funds, solely in the fixed deposits with the PSBs, has been reviewed in the current economic scenario in the light of the guidelines on investment of Provident fund/pension fund/surplus funds issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and Department of Public Enterprises. In supersession of the earlier instructions, revised guidelines have been issued by this Ministry to all the Major Ports on 27.7.2018 on investing of their pension /provident/gratuity fund and surplus funds.
- **viii Relief and assistance to the flood affected areas in the Ernakulam district** wake of the recent unprecedented rains and floods in the state of Kerala, the Cochin Port helped in bringing relief materials to the State during the initial days. The Port also took several measures for providing relief and assistance to the flood affected areas in the Ernakulam district. These included organizing Relief Camps, medical aids assistance, food distribution, priority berthing of vessels bringing flood relief materials etc. Relief materials brought by Naval Ship INS Deepak, INS Mysore, INS Mumbai, INS Sharda and Coast Guard Vessels ICGS Vikram were also handled on priority at the port. Cochin Port Trust contributed Rs.62 lakhs to the Chief Minister Relief Fund comprising Rs. 31 lakhs as employee's one day salary and equal amount from the COPT's funds. Similarly, employees of Kolkata Port Trust also contributed one day's salary (Rs.83 Lakhs) to Kerala Chief Minister Distress Relief Fund (KCMDRF) and also carried relief material in containers free of cost from Kolkata to Cochin Port.
- **Award by Permanent Court of Arbitration** In an arbitration case involving one of the projects in Kolkata Port, Louis Dreyfus Armateurs (LDA) had invoked Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement and had taken the Union of India for arbitration at the Permanent Court of Arbitration. In its award dated 11.09.2018, the Permanent Court of Arbitration has ordered the LDA to pay India (a) USD 540,885.30 towards India's share of the Tribunal and PCA costs of arbitration, and (b) USD 6,626,971.85 towards India's costs and expenses of legal representation and assistance.
- **Security Clearance of Bidders in PPP projects** Revised guidelines have been issued on 31st January, 2018 for enhancing the validity period of security clearance of bidders/ companies participating in Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects and dredging projects in Major Ports from three years to five years so as to harmonise it with the validity period followed by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- **1.9 Chabahar Port Project** During the visit of the Iranian delegation to India in January 2018, a business meeting was organized in which number of prospective entrepreneurs interested in establishing units in the Chabahar Free Trade Zone participated. Issues relating to the investment opportunities in the development of Chabahar Port were also discussed during the meeting. The Interim operations contract for Chabahar Port was signed between the two sides on 17.02.2018. A bilateral meeting to discuss various issues relating to the Chabahar Port Project was held on 10.10.2018 in New Delhi between the Indian Delegation led by Secretary (Shipping) and Iranian Delegation led by Mr. Mohammad Rastad, Deputy Minister and Managing Director for Ports and Maritime organization (PMO) of Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iranian delegation accompanied by MD, Indian Ports Global Ltd. (IPGL) and representative from Ministry of Shipping, also visited Jawaharlal Nehru Port to understand port operations.

SAGARMALA

- **2.1 Sagarmala Projects** More than 605 projects having a total cost of Rs. 8.8 lakh crore (cr.) have been identified under Sagarmala. Of these, 89 projects worth Rs. 0.14 lakh crore are completed and 443 projects worth Rs. 4.32 lakh crore are under various stages of implementation and development. Sagarmala Programme aims to promote port-led development with a view to reducing logistics cost for EXIM and domestic trade.
- **2.2 Port Capacity Target** Ministry of Shipping, along with the State Governments are striving to increase the overall port capacity to 3500+ million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) to cater to the projected traffic of 2500 MMTPA by 2025. Towards this end, 249 port modernization projects have been identified. Out of these, 107 port capacity expansion projects (cost: Rs. 67,962 cr) were identified from the port master plans of 12 major ports and are expected to add 794 MMTPA to the major port capacity over the next 20 years.

- **2.3 Rerating of capacity of Major Ports** As per the Berthing Policy for Major Ports ,2016 approved by the Ministry of Shipping, a standardized methodology was laid down to calculate norms for dry bulk berths. An exercise was undertaken to benchmark port capacity with global standards set by the berthing policy and re-rate the capacities of major ports. The Declared capacity of major ports was 1066 MTPA as on 31.3.2017. After the re-rating exercise, the effective rated capacity and desired occupancy of major ports as on 31.3.2017 were 1359 MTPA and 989 MTPA respectively.
- **2.4 Port modernization** Under Project Unnati, global benchmarks were adopted to improve the efficiency and productivity Key Performing Indicators (KPIs) for 12 major ports. Around 116 initiatives were identified across 12 major ports to unlock more than 100 MTPA capacity just through efficiency improvement. Out of which, 91 initiatives have been implemented to unlock around 80 MTPA capacity.
- **2.5 Development of new ports** In addition to projects for capacity expansion of major ports, 6 new port locations, namely – VadHAVAN (Maharashtra), Enayam (Tamil Nadu), Tajpur (West Bengal), Paradip Outer Harbour (Odisha), Sirkazhi (Tamil Nadu), Belekeri (Karnataka) have been identified to increase overall cargo handling capacity
- **2.6 Port Connectivity Enhancement** Rail and road connectivity projects are being undertaken to enhance port connectivity to the hinterland,

Rail

- **Indian Port Rail Corporation Limited (IPRCL)** has taken up 32 works (cost : Rs. 18,253 cr) across 9 major ports of which 8 works (Rs. 175 cr) have been completed. In addition, 23 rail connectivity projects (Rs. 24,877 Cr) identified under Sagarmala are being taken up by Ministry of Railways out of which 7 projects (Rs. 2,491 cr) are completed. Further, 15 rail connectivity projects (Rs. 4,193 cr) have been taken up through Rail-ports and other operators out of which 3 projects (Rs 52 cr) are completed. A total of 52 projects (Rs. 44,605 cr) are in various stages of implementation by these agencies.
- **Indore- Manmad Rail Line** An MoU for implementation of the 362 km Indore- Manmad New Railway Line Project was signed on 28.08.2018 between Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, Ministry of Railways, Govt of Maharashtra and Govt of Madhya Pradesh. The new project will reduce the distance from Mumbai/Pune to key central India locations by 171 kilometers, resulting in lower logistics costs. This is especially significant as the new railway line will pass through the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor nodes of Igatpuri, Nashik and Sinnar; Pune and Khed; and Dhule and Nardana.
- **Road** 112 road connectivity projects are being undertaken by various agencies. Out of the 112 road projects, 54 road projects (Rs. 22,158 Cr) are included under Bharatmalaprogramme. 102 projects will be executed by MoRTH and NHAI and the remaining 10 road projects by State PWD, Port Authorities and Sagarmala Development Company (SDC) in coordination with MoRTH / NHAI. A total of 5 projects (Rs 268 cr) have been completed and 97 projects (Rs 1,80,347 cr) are under implementation.
- **2.7 Port Led Industrialization** 14 Coastal Economic Zones (CEZ) covering all the Maritime States and Union Territories have been identified. CEZ perspective plans have been prepared and Detailed Master Plans will be prepared for 4 pilot CEZs - Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh - in the first phase of development. Policy framework for development of CEZ is under finalization based on recommendation of Inter-Ministerial Committee(IMC) for CEZ development under the aegis of CEO, NITI Aayog.
- **In addition, 38 potential** port-linked industrial clusters across Energy, Materials, Discrete Manufacturing and Maritime sectors have been identified. Out of these industrial parks, one mega food processing park at Satara, Maharashtra (Rs. 139 cr) has been completed and 3 Power Clusters (Rs. 76547 cr) in Krishnapatnam (AP), Ennore (TN) and Tuticorin (TN), 8 Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (Rs. 1704 cr) in AP, Gujarat, Odisha, Kerala, West Bengal and 3 Food Processing Parks (Rs. 1,348 cr) in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala are under implementation. Also under development are: SEZ at JNPT (Rs. 12,624 Cr), Smart Industrial Port City (SIPC) at Paradip (Rs. 3,350 Cr) and Kandla (Rs. 11,147 Cr) and Coastal Employment Units (CEUs) at VoCPT and KPL.
- **2.8 Coastal Shipping Cabotage relaxation** To promote trade , ease of doing business and Coastal Shipping in India as per the stated objectives of the SagarmalaProgramme, relaxation under Section 406 and 407 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1958 with respect to cabotage was notified with respect to fertilizers, agricultural products, fisheries, horticultural and animal produce commodities, and containers . Based on feedback of industry on this relaxation, a clarification was further issued in September 2018 that the minimum movement of fertilizer to the extent of 50% of the total cargo onboard a ship is applicable only for cargo loaded at any Indian port for coastal movement .
- **Perspective plan on Coastal Shipping** A study with an objective to prepare a robust perspective plan with actionable recommendations to promote coastal and short sea shipping, integrating seamlessly with IWT and leveraging multimodal linkages with rail and road is underway in association with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). As a part of this study two stakeholder workshops were organized in June 2018 and October 2018, wherein an analysis of commodities that can be transported through coastal shipping and a corresponding analysis of potential origin destination pairs was presented to ports, shipping lines and industries that can use coastal shipping.
- **Coastal Berth Scheme** 41 projects (Rs. 1,535cr) have been sanctioned under the Coastal Berth Scheme for financial assistance of Rs. 633cr out of which Rs. 334 cr has been released to Major Ports/State Maritime Boards/State Governments. The Coastal Berth Scheme for creation of infrastructure to promote movement of cargo/passengers by sea/National waterways has been extended upto March 2020 and its scope has been expanded to cover the cost of preparation of DPR and capital dredging at Major Ports.
- **2.9 Skill development** Ministry of Shipping has undertaken skill gap analysis for the coastal community in 21 coastal districts and assisted domain ministries and state governments in implementation of action plan for them. As a result, 1917 people have been trained and 1123 placed in jobs.

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

INLAND WATER TRANSPORT (IWT)

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

- **3.2 Freight Village and Logistic Hub at Varanasi** To improve logistics efficiency, cargo aggregation, warehousing facilities and multimodal transportation, a Freight Village and Logistic Hub is proposed at Varanasi to be set up in continuation of the multi-modal terminal as part of the JMVP. The proposal for undertaking the pre-investment activities relating to setting up of the Project at an estimated cost of Rs.165 crore was appraised by the Delegated Investment Board (DIB) and approved by the Competent Authority.
- **3.3 Development of NW-4** As part of Phase-I of the development of NW-4 from Muktiyala to Vijaywada, mainly for facilitating movement of construction material for Amravati, the upcoming capital city of Andhra Pradesh, Ro-Ro movement commenced in March 2018 and total quantity of Cargo moved till October, 2018 is 2.35 lakhs MT.
- **3.4 Development of eight (08) new NWs** Mandovi (NW-68), Zuari (NW-111), Cumbarjua (NW-27), Barak (NW-16), Gandak (NW-37), Rupnarayan (NW-86), Alappuzha-Kottayam-Athirampuzha Canal (NW-9) and Sunderbans (NW-97), were considered for development during 2017-18 and the progress thus far is given below:- A Tripartite MoU has been signed on 03.05.2018 between IWAI, Marmugao Port Trust (MPT) and Captain of Ports, Govt. of Goa for the development of three NWs (27, 68 & 111) of Goa. Tendering by MPT for floating jetties and aids to navigation is in advanced stage.
- **The bandalling** and channel marking in Gandakriver(NW-37) has been taken up and work is continuing in 2018-19 .
- **Maintenance dredging** for fairway development work in Silchar-Bhanga stretch of river Barak (NW-16) has commenced. In Sunderbans waterways (NW-97), work order has been issued for dredging work in May, 2018 and tender for floating pontoon terminal has been invited. In Rupnarayanriver (NW-86), work has been awarded for setting up of one floating terminal. Tender for dredging work is in progress.
- **In Alappuzha – Kottayam – Athirampuzha Canal (NW-9)**, supply order for night navigation facilities has been issued and supply of buoys completed in September, 2018. Dredging is proposed departmentally.
- **3.5 New Ro-Ro Services** Ro-Ro services between Ibrahimpatnam and Lingayapalem on NW-4 have commenced thereby reducing road distance of approximately 70 km. IWAI, in collaboration with Assam Government, has launched a new RO-RO facility connecting Neamati-Majuli island in Assam on 12 Oct 2018 . The facility is being provided by IWAI vessel, Bhupen Hazarika having a capacity to carry 8 trucks and 100 passengers. The Ro-Ro facility traverses a distance of only 12.7 km on the river route which has cut down the circuitous road route of 423 km that trucks take from Neamati-Majuli Island via Tezpur Road Bridge.
- **3.6 Procurement of Ro-Ro Vessels** IWAI has signed an agreement with M/s. Cochin Shipyard Limited for construction and supply of 10 Ro-Ro/Ro-Pax vessels at a cost of Rs 110 cr. on 11.07.2018. The vessels will be delivered between June, 2019 to December, 2019 for deployment in NW-1, 2 and 3.
- **3.7 Movement of Cargo on NWs** IWAI has been making special efforts for promoting movement of cargo on National Waterways. In the first half of 2018-19, cargo traffic has increased to 33.8 MMT which is 102 % more as compared to 16.7 MMT in the same period in 2017-18. The prominent initiatives are given below:- Completion of the trial run of the longest haul of IWT cargo over a distance of 2085 kms from Kahalgaon (Bihar) on NW-1 to Dhubri (Assam) on NW-2 via the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route in October 2018 . The cargo comprising of 1235 MT of fly ash was transported in IWAI flotilla tug "Trisul" with dumb barges "Ajay" & "Dikhu".
- **Transportation of 925 MT** of imported coal from Haldia dock complex on NW-1 to Dhubri on NW-2 using Indo – Bangladesh protocol route covering a distance of 1205 km. The first movement of container cargo on NWs for transportation of 16 containers of PepsiCo products from Kolkata to Varanasi (1280km) completed over a period of 12 days in November 2018. Return journey from Varanasi to Kolkata carried fertilizer of IFFCO Phulpur, Dabur products and PepsiCo products.
- **3.8 Connecting cargo owners and shippers** The IWAI launched a dedicated portal to connect cargo owners and shippers with real time data on availability of vessels. The landmark e-connect measure will enable direct interaction among the vessel operators, shippers and cargo owners as currently, there is no platform for furnishing information on the availability of vessels in the market. It has been designed and developed by the in-house IT Department and the Traffic Wing of IWAI as part of its preparedness for optimal use of its ongoing capacity development on various National Waterways. Named as the Forum of Cargo-Owners and Logistics-Operators (FOCAL), the link of the portal is available on the homepage of IWAI website www.iwai.nic.in.
- **3.9 Modern new ship designs for Ganga** 13 standardized state of art ship designs suitable for large barge haulage in low draft on river Ganga (NW-1) were made public by the IWAI on 31.08.2018. The designs will help overcome the unique navigation challenges river Ganga throws up due to its complex river morphology, hydraulics, acute bends, shifting channels, meanders and current. These will also serve as an enabler for domestic shipbuilding industry working on inland vessels and open up huge possibilities for cargo and passenger movement on NW-1. Available free on the IWAI website, the new designs will obviate the dependence of Indian Shipbuilders on foreign ship design for IWT and translate into a savings of Rs. 30-50 lakh in the building of a vessel.

SHIPPING 4.1 Directorate General of Shipping

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

- **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006** The applicability of provisions of Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 has been extended to merchant vessels of below 500 Gross Tonnage, thereby ensuring the benefit of welfare measures available under the Convention to seafarers working on smaller ships as well.
- **Ease of doing business** A Module has been developed and implemented for Recruitment and Placement Agencies [RPS] for filing fresh applications, annual inspections and renew inspection online. This will facilitate easy approval of RPS agencies and their monitoring. New CDC Rules, 2017, which ease the process of issuance of CDC based on five STCW courses has been put into force w.e.f 14.01.18, for an ease of seafarers. The issuance of CDC is completely online. There is now no need to undergo long time pre-sea courses for getting CDC by the seafarers.
- **Admiralty Act and Rules** The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Act, 2017, has been enforced w.e.f. 01.04.18. As per new Act High Courts of all the coastal states shall exercise admiralty jurisdiction over maritime claims which include several aspects not limited to goods imported and chattel as earlier, but also other claims such as claims in relation to payment of wages of seamen, loss of life, salvages, mortgage, loss or damage, services and repairs, insurance, ownership and lien, threat of damage to environment etc. The Act accords highest priority to payment of wages of the seafarers.
- **The Act** also provides for protection against wrongful and unjustified arrest and has provision for transfer of cases from one High Court to other High Court. The Admiralty (Assessors) Rules drafted under the Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of maritime Claims) Act, 2017 has been notified. This will facilitate the appointment of Assessors for use of the Admiralty Courts as and when required during the admiralty proceedings.
- **India re-elected to IMO Council** India has been re-elected to the Council of the International Maritime Organization [IMO] under Category "B" representing the States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade, for the biennium 2018-19, at the 30th session of the Assembly of the IMO, held at London on 1st December, 2017, by securing second highest votes in the said category.
- **4.2 Cruise shipping** i. A modernized International Cruise Terminal at Chennai Port was inaugurated on 12.10.2018. ii. Mumbai Goa cruise service was launched at a function organized on 20.10.2018
- **4.3 Shipbuilding** The Government of India has an ongoing Rs. 4000 crores Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy for 10 years (2016-2026) to encourage domestic shipbuilding. Under this policy, financial assistance is granted to Indian Shipyards equal to 20% of lower of 'Contract Price' or the 'Fair Price' or actual receipt of each vessel built by them. The rate of financial assistance will be reduced by 3% after every three years. An updated version of the web portal launched by this Ministry for processing applications is being operated by DG (S). DG (S) has received applications for in principle approval / financial release for 30 vessels. Ministry of Shipping has so far released Rs. 11.89 cr. for 4 vessels to 3 Indian Shipyards.
- **4.4 Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)** CSL has launched two 500 pax vessels for Andaman & Nicobar Administration for interisland transportation on 30.10.2018. CSL to construct and supply two Ro-Ro and eight Ro-Pax vessels to IWAI for which an Agreement was signed on 11.07.2018. The vessels are expected to be delivered between June, 2019 to December, 2019 for deployment in NW-1, NW-2 and NW-3.
- **Foundation stone** was laid on 30.10.2018 for setting up India's largest Dry Dock at Cochin Shipyard costing Rs. 1799 cr. The new large sized stepped dock at CSL premises has a length of 310 m, width of 75/60 m and draft of upto 9.5M. An MOU was signed by CSL on January 18, 2018 with Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) for export of Defence vessels incorporating Defence systems developed by DRDO and produced by Indian OEMs.
- **CSL has signed** a contract on 29.1.2018 for construction of 16 nos. Tuna Long Lining & Gillnetting Fishing Vessels under the diversification of trawl fishing boats from Palkbay into deep sea fishing boats under Central sector on Blue Revolution Scheme with financial assistance from Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu.
- **4.4 Ship repair facilities** MOU signed by CSL and Mumbai Port Trust on 11.1.2018 for operations and management of ship repair facility and allied services at Indira Dock. MOU signed with Kolkata Port Trust on 17.3.2018 for operations and management of ship repair facility and allied services at Netaji Subhash Dock.
- **4.5 Shipping Corporation of India** In recognition of SCI's commitment to the principles of gender diversity & equality at the workplace reflected by the representation of women across hierarchical grades including SCI Board, SCI was awarded 'Winner' under the category 'Contribution of Women in PSEs'.
- **4.6 Andaman Lakshadweep and Harbour Work** The Andaman Lakshadweep Harbour Works (ALHW) is entrusted with the responsibility of formulating and implementing the programme of the Government for providing Ports and Harbour structures including allied facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands. The following works were undertaken/initiated in 2018 at A&N and Lakshadweep Islands:-
- **Restoration of damaged Breakwater at Hut Bay** - Placing of CC block of size 1m x1m x1m and 8T Tetra pods from 800m to 1200 m chain age at Sea side of Breakwater at Hut Bay in Little Andaman at an estimated cost of Rs. 14.66 crore and it will be completed by August, 2019. Restoration of damaged breakwater at Kalpeni Island in Lakshadweep at an estimated cost of Rs. 34.56 crore and the project would be completed by June, 2020. Construction of Sea wall /Shore protection work at Mus in Car Nicobar in Andaman & Nicobar Islands at an estimated cost of Rs. 49.19 crore. The project would be completed by Dec, 2020.
- **4.7 Indian Maritime University** Training programs for African officials have been completed under the International Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program of Ministry of External Affairs in the domain of Port Management, Marine Engineering and Ocean Engineering. IMU conducted one day workshop in its Kolkata Campus on 26.11.2018, organized by CIMAC (Conseil International des Machines a Combustion) – the International Council of Internal Combustion Engines, based at Frankfurt, Germany. IMU is in final stages of complete automation of the examination process with the proposed introduction of onscreen valuation of answer scripts.
- **4.8 Directorate General of Lighthouse and Lightships** DGLL organized Aids to Navigation (AToN) Manager Course Level-1 from 23/07/2018 to 17/08/2018 at NTI Kolkata. Participants from India and other countries viz. Sudan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Somalia, Singapore, Bangladesh, China, Myanmar, Indonesia, Fiji attended the course.
- **DGPS (Differential GPS)** is a system to provide positional corrections to GPS signals. DGPS uses a fixed, known position to adjust real time GPS signals to eliminate pseudorange errors. Under Recapitalisation (Replacement of Equipment) of Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) Phase I, equipment at 13 DGPS sites have been upgraded to Differential Global Navigation Satellite system (DGNSS). The upgraded system has capability to respond to Navigation with

Indian Constellation (NavIC) / Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) signals.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

- **Bangladesh** As a follow up of an MoU signed by India and Bangladesh for development of fairway in the Ashuganj-Zakiganj and Sirajganj-Daikhawa stretches of Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route by sharing the cost on 80: 20 (India : Bangladesh) basis Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has issued the work orders for both the stretches and work is expected to commence shortly.
- **The Shipping Secretary** Level talks and the 19th Meeting of Standing Committee on Protocol on Inland Waterways Transit and Trade were held between India and Bangladesh at New Delhi on 24th and 25th October, 2018. At these meetings, the two sides agreed to extend the Protocol route and include new ports of call. Specifically, it was decided to include a stretch of Rupnarayan River (National Waterway-86) in the protocol route and to declare Kolaghat in West Bengal and Chilmari in Bangladesh as new ports of call; declare Badarpur on river Barak (NW- 16) as the extended port of call of Karimganj in Assam and Ghorasal of Ashuganj in Bangladesh on reciprocal basis. Currently 3.5 MMT of cargo is transported on protocol routes through inland waterways which is expected to increase substantially after the formal declaration of additional ports of calls and extension of protocol routes.
- **India and Bangladesh** agreed that a Joint Technical Committee will explore the technical feasibility of operationalisation of Dhulian-Rajshani protocol route upto Aricha and the reconstruction and opening up of Jangipur navigational lock on river Bhagirathi subject to the provisions of the Treaty between India and Bangladesh on Sharing of Ganga Waters at Farakka, 1996. This move has the potential to reduce the distance to Assam by more than 450 kms on the protocol routes.
- **To bring about significant** reduction in logistics cost and faster delivery of Bangladesh export cargo, Indian side raised the point regarding permitting 'Third country' EXIM Trade under Coastal Shipping Agreement and PIWTT by allowing transshipment through ports on the East Coast of India. Bangladesh agreed to hold stakeholder consultations and revert on the matter.
- **The following Agreement/Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) were signed by the two countries on 25.10.18:-** To facilitate connectivity to North Eastern States through Kolkata and Haldia ports, movement of EXIM cargo and reduce logistic costs, an Agreement on the use of Chattogram and Mongla Port for movement of goods to and from India between the people's Republic of Bangladesh and the Republic of India. To open up connectivity for passengers and tourists from the two countries through Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of MoU on Passenger and Cruise Services on the Coastal and Protocol route between India and Bangladesh. To add Pangaon from Bangladesh and Dhubri in Assam as new Ports of Call, an Addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT).
- **Nepal** As a follow up of the decision taken in April, 2018 by the Prime Ministers of India and Nepal to introduce inland waterways connectivity between the two countries, Technical Scoping Missions have visited each other's facilities and discussions have been held at Kathmandu and Kolkata in May and September 2018, respectively. The development and training requirements of Nepal IWT sector, reduction of logistic cost, transshipment options through Sahibganj (Jharkhand) & Kalughat (Patna) to Nepal from Kolkata have been discussed.
- **Memorandum of Understanding** An MoU was signed with Republic of Korea on Mutual Recognition of Certificate of Competency of sea farers. It will open up employment opportunities on Korean Ships for more than 1.5 Lakh Indian Seafarers. An MoU Signed with Malta on Maritime Cooperation in the field of research and innovation related to IMO.

Difference between a full Budget and an interim Budget

- **Know about:** Article 266 of the Constitution of India mandates that Parliamentary approval is required to draw money from the Consolidated Fund of India. Besides, Article 114 (3) of the Constitution stipulates that no amount can be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund without the enactment of a law (appropriation bill).
- **What is a vote on account?** A vote on account essentially means that the government seeks the approval of Parliament for meeting expenditure — paying salaries, ongoing programmes in various sectors etc — with no changes in the taxation structure, until a new government takes over and presents a full Budget that is revised for the full fiscal.
- **Why present a vote on account?** The reasoning is that there is little time to get approvals from Parliament for various grants to ministries and departments, and to debate these as well as any provisions for changes in taxation. More importantly, the reasoning is that it would be the prerogative of the new government to signal its policy direction, which is often reflected in the Budget.
- **Difference between Full Budget and Vote on Account:** Full Budget deals with both expenditure and revenue side but Vote-on-account deals only with the expenditure side of the government's budget. The vote-on-account is normally valid for two months but full budget is valid for 12 months (a financial year). As a convention, a vote-on-account is treated as a formal matter and passed by Lok Sabha without discussion. But passing for budget happens only after

discussions and voting on demand for grants.

- **What's an Interim Budget?** An Interim Budget is not the same as a 'Vote on Account'. While a 'Vote on Account' deals only with the expenditure side of the government's budget, an Interim Budget is a complete set of accounts, including both expenditure and receipts. An Interim Budget gives the complete financial statement, very similar to a full Budget.

Institutes of Eminence Scheme

- **Background:** The empowered expert committee headed by former Chief Election Commissioner N. Gopalaswami had initially recommended 11 institutions for the tag in July 2018. In December, the committee recommended 19 more names, taking the total list to 30.
- **Institutes of Eminence scheme:** The institutes of eminence scheme under the Union human resource development (HRD) ministry aims to project Indian institutes to global recognition. The selected institutes will enjoy complete academic and administrative autonomy.
- **The government will** run 10 of these and they will receive special funding. The selection shall be made through challenge method mode by the Empowered Expert Committee constituted for the purpose. Eligibility: Only higher education institutions currently placed in the top 500 of global rankings or top 50 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) are eligible to apply for the eminence tag. The private Institutions of Eminence can also come up as greenfield ventures provided the sponsoring organisation submits a convincing perspective plan for 15 years.

FMCG sector

- **Consumption growth** in 2018 was led by favourable macros like growth in GDP, lower inflation and manufacturers passing on the benefits of margin expansion from the GST regime.
- **Overview of FMCG sector:** Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector is the 4th largest sector in the Indian economy with Household and Personal Care accounting for 50% of FMCG sales in India. Growing awareness, easier access and changing lifestyles have been the key growth drivers for the sector.
- **Investments/ Developments:** The government has allowed 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in food processing and single-brand retail and 51% in multi-brand retail. This would bolster employment and supply chains, and also provide high visibility for FMCG brands in organised retail markets, bolstering consumer spending and encouraging more product launches.
- **Some of the major initiatives taken by the government to promote the FMCG sector in India are as follows:** Consumer Protection Bill with special emphasis on setting up an extensive mechanism to ensure simple, speedy, accessible, affordable and timely delivery of justice to consumers.
- **The Goods and Services Tax (GST)** is beneficial for the FMCG industry as many of the FMCG products such as Soap, Toothpaste and Hair oil now come under 18 per cent tax bracket against the previous 23-24 per cent rate. The GST is expected to transform logistics in the FMCG sector into a modern and efficient model as all major corporations are remodeling their operations into larger logistics and warehousing.

Rajasthan Zika strain is endemic to Asia

- **What's the concern now?** The finding that the outbreak was caused by an endemic virus is quite important. It suggests that people in the region may have been previously exposed to the virus, building herd immunity that may limit future outbreaks. It also states that the strain of virus found in India is different from that found in Brazil.
- **While this is good news,** because it implies that a portion of the population could be immune, it could also mean that Zika-related birth defects such as microcephaly were occurring even before the virus was first detected in India.
- **Why India should be worried about Zika outbreak?** Limited knowledge about epidemiological characteristics of virus and its interaction with other arboviruses, such as dengue. Limited lab capacity and cross reactivity of diagnostic flavivirus antibody assays.

- **Absence of population immunity.** High mobility of population and cross-border movement of travellers with infections. Favourable breeding conditions for Aedes mosquitoes and our inability to control mosquito breeding in the past for dengue. Poor surveillance system. Underfunded and inadequate infrastructure in healthcare system in India resulting in inadequate outbreak control response.
- **Need of the hour:** Enhanced and strengthened surveillance. Establish rapid response teams. Enhanced risk communications. Establish access to a qualified diagnostic laboratory. Regular vector surveillance and integrated vector management (IVM). Travel measures. Health education for community mobilization. Inter-sector convergence and Co-ordination with International agencies.
- **Is India prepared for disease outbreaks?** Over the last decade, the Indian government has strengthened the surveillance and response system for catching disease outbreaks early. India may have improved its disease surveillance network, but reducing and limiting disease outbreaks requires several other measures, many lying outside the scope of the healthcare system.
- **Challenges ahead for India:** Can the country bring the large number of private practitioners into the disease surveillance network?
- **Will the government** increase its investment on healthcare, and bring them on a par with countries that have a good healthcare system? Will India improve its ability to quickly develop vaccines from scratch? Will research institutions and public health officials improve their health risk communication?

National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP)

- **Key highlights:** Aim: To attract talent and strengthen higher agricultural education in the country.
- **Funded by the World Bank and the Indian Government on a 50:50 basis.** The objective of the NAHEP for India is to support participating agricultural universities and ICAR in providing more relevant and higher quality education to Agricultural University students. In addition, a four year degree in Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries and Forestry has been declared a professional degree.

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)

- **Highlights of the Report:** Of these 313 cities, 241 (77%) had PM10 levels beyond the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). These specify upper limits to a range of airborne chemicals and compounds. While 102 of these cities were included in the NCAP, the remaining 139 cities were left out. That's because the government's list of 102 cities relied on average pollution data until 2015, whereas Airpocalypse III used data updated up to 2017.
- **Even if the NCAP** were able to reduce pollution by 30% by 2024, 153 cities would still be left with pollution levels exceeding the NAAQS. Of the 139 cities that have not been included in the non-attainment list under the NCAP, there are several cities that have a population of more than 1 million, and PM levels (recorded in 2017) above NAAQS. These include: Ranchi, Dhanbad (Jharkhand); Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh); Chennai, Madurai (Tamil Nadu); Meerut (Uttar Pradesh); Pimpri-Chindwar, Thane, (Maharashtra); Surat, Rajkot, Vadodara (Gujarat); and Howrah (West Bengal).
- **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):** The government, earlier this month, announced the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). This is the first ever effort in the country to frame a national framework for air quality management with a time-bound reduction target. The programme will not be notified under the Environment Protection Act or any other Act to create a firm mandate with a strong legal back up for cities and regions to implement NCAP in a time bound manner for effective reduction.
- **Key features of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):** Achieve a national-level target of 20-30% reduction of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration by between 2017 and 2024.
- **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** will execute this nation-wide programme in consonance with the section 162 (b) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1986. The programme has been launched with an initial budget of ₹300 crore for the first two years.
- **The plan includes 102** non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015.
- **Non-attainment cities** are those which have been consistently showing poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. These include Delhi, Varanasi, Bhopal, Kolkata, Noida, Muzaffarpur, and Mumbai.

- **As part of the programme**, the Centre also plans to scale up the air quality monitoring network across India. At least 4,000 monitors are needed across the country, instead of the existing 101 real-time air quality (AQ) monitors, according to an analysis.
- **The plan proposes a three-tier system**, including real-time physical data collection, data archiving, and an action trigger system in all 102 cities, besides extensive plantation plans, research on clean-technologies, landscaping of major arterial roads, and stringent industrial standards.
- **It also proposes state-level plans** of e-mobility in the two-wheeler sector, rapid augmentation of charging infrastructure, stringent implementation of BS-VI norms, boosting public transportation system, and adoption of third-party audits for polluting industries.
- **Various committees: The national plan** has proposed setting up an apex committee under environment minister, a steering committee under-secretary (environment) and a monitoring committee under a joint secretary. There would be project monitoring committees at the state-level with scientists and trained personnel.

NSDC:

- **Why in News? Renault-Nissan** has signed a pact with National Skill Development Corporation to train its workforce in the alliance plant in Chennai for future technologies. NSDC would assist the Renault-Nissan workforce develop competency standards in emerging manufacturing technologies.
- **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 was set up by Ministry of Finance as Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. The Government of India through Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) holds 49% of the share capital of NSDC, while the private sector has the balance 51% of the share capital.
- **Functions:** NSDC aims to promote skill development by catalyzing creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions. It also 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.

Chin refugees:

- **Why in News? Eight** organisations of the Chakma community have submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Home Affairs seeking the inclusion of Chin refugees in India by further amending the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.
- **Overview:** The Chins are one of the major ethnic groups in Myanmar, and are mostly Christians. The number of Chin refugees in India is at least 1.2 lakh. There are an estimated 100,000 Chins in Mizoram, which is 20% of the total Chin population in Myanmar. Manipur too has an unspecified number of Chins, who are ethnically related to the majority Mizos of Mizoram and the Kuki-Zomi groups in Manipur.

Ganga Expressway:

- **Context:** The government of Uttar Pradesh has approved the construction of the Ganga Expressway.
- **Key facts:** The 600km long expressway would be the longest expressway in the world. The expressway will provide for better connectivity of the Prayagraj (Allahabad) to Western Pradesh.

Golden langur breeding project in Assam:

- **Context:** Assam has announced the success of the Golden Langur Conservation Breeding Programme in the State. The golden langur conservation project was undertaken at the Assam State Zoo in Guwahati during the 2011-12 fiscal.
- **The golden langur** (*Trachypitecus geei*) is currently endangered. Apart from a 60 square mile area in north-western Assam, small populations are found in Bhutan and Tripura. Summary of Important Editorials:

Think universal basic capital:

- **Highlights:** Though economy is doing well, human development as a whole is not up to the expected levels in the country. Here, the country continues to be compared with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Need of the hour:** India's economic growth must trickle down much faster to people at the bottom of the pyramid: to poorer farmers, landless rural labour, and hundreds of millions of workers living on the edge in low-paying, 'flexible' forms of employment with no social security.
- **Solution:** Economists seem to be offering three solutions to the economy's structural problems. One, that there is no problem. Two, more privatisation. And, three, a universal basic income (UBI) to be provided by the state.

UBI:

- **UBI has** appeared as a silver bullet solution to all the problems that the country is facing on the economy side. It will be an income provided to everybody by the very state that the capitalists say should get out of their way, and to whom they are unwilling to pay more taxes.
- **The beauty** of a 'universal' basic income, its proponents say, is that it avoids messy political questions about who deserves assistance. It also side-steps the challenge of actually providing the services required: education, health, food, etc. Just give the people cash: let them buy what they need.
- **However, if** the cash will not provide citizens with good quality and affordable education and health, because neither the government nor the private sector is able or willing to, this will not solve the basic human development problems that must be solved.

What about QUBRI (quasi-universal basic rural income)?

- **To make UBI** financially and politically feasible, few economists have suggested a QUBRI (quasi-universal basic rural income), targeted only at poorer people in the rural areas. Their scheme is no longer universal.
- **First, it will** exclude the not-so-poor in rural areas as morally it should. Political questions about who should be included will have to be addressed.
- **Second, it will** not cover the masses of urban poor working for low and uncertain wages.
- **Therefore, a** simplistic UBI will not solve the fundamental problems of the economy.

Universal basic capital:

- **A better solution** to structural inequality than UBI is universal basic capital, or UBC, which has begun to pop up in international policy circles.
- **In this alternative** approach, people own the wealth they generate as shareholders of their collective enterprises. Amul, SEWA, Grameen, and others have shown a way.
- **Some economists** go further and also propose a 'dividend' for all citizens, by providing them a share of initial public offerings on the stock market, especially from companies that use 'public assets', such as publicly funded research, or environmental resources.
- **Overall measures concluded:** One, focus on building state capacity beginning with implementation of the recommendations of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission. Two, strengthen the missing middle-level institutions for aggregation of tiny enterprises and representation of workers. Three, the creativity of economists could be better applied to developing ideas for UBC than UBI.



Year-ender 2018 of Ministry of Food Processing Industries

- **Ministry of Food Processing Industries issues guidelines for OPERATION GREENS** Union Minister Smt Harsimrat Badal calls for cleanliness to be given utmost importance across food processing sector
- **Union Minister Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal inaugurates PMKK Patiala** Smt Harsimrat Badal speaks with Chief Minister of Kerala; assures all assistance to the State from her Ministry International Conference on Recent Advances in Food Processing Technology (iCRAFPT) gets underway at IIFPT, Thanjavur NIFTEM has potential to become Harvard of food processing sector: Union Minister Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal
- **Food Processing Ministry** to collaborate with international labs for wider acceptability of NIFTEM approved products Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana is expected to benefit 20 lakh farmers and generate 5,30,500 employments by the year 2019-20
- **Allocation for Ministry** of Food Processing has been doubled in the Budget 2018-19 to Rs. 1400 Crores: Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal Posted On: 31 DEC 2018 5:20PM by PIB Delhi Ministry of Food Processing Industry under the leadership of Union Minister Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal is leading the food processing industry in India from the front. The efforts of the Ministry have led to a FDI in the food processing sector in India rising by 24 per cent in 2017-18. Highlights of the major achievements are as follows
- **Mega Food Parks:** 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 aid '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.
- **Five Mega Food Parks were inaugurated during this period taking the total number of Mega Food Parks** in the country to 14. These include Himalayan Mega Food Park at Kashipur in Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttarakhand Greentech Mega Food Park at Roopangarh Village in Ajmer, Rajasthan Satara Mega Food Park in Satara District, Maharashtra Paithan Mega Food Park in Aurangabad District in Maharashtra Gujarat Agro Infrastructure Mega Food Park
- **Creation/Expansion** of Food Processing Preservation Capacities (CEFPPC)- 134 projects have been approved under the scheme till date
- **Integrated Cold Chain** – Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing the Scheme of Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure as one of the component of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana with the objective of arresting post-harvest losses of horticulture & non-horticulture produce and providing remunerative price to farmers for their produce. The integrated cold chain and preservation infrastructure can be set up by individuals, groups of entrepreneurs, cooperative societies, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), NGOs, Central/State PSUs, etc. The scheme is primarily private sector driven and proposals under this scheme are invited through Expression of Interest (EOI). 81 projects have been approved by Inter Ministerial Approval Committee (IMAC).
- **Creation of Backward and Forward Linkage-70 projects have been approved under the scheme till date** Agro processing Clusters-33 projects have been approved under the scheme till date
- **Towards cleanliness** Efforts towards cleanliness were undertaken under Swachhta Pakhwada which was observed from 16th to 31st October. On the first day the Minister launched the campaign with the inauguration of a book "Waste to Wealth Technology" prepared by Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology, Thanjavur, Tamilnadu. During the campaign industry bodies like ASSOCHAM, FICCI, DICCI, PHDCCI, AIFPA and CII organised Swachhta Awareness Programme and training camps for street vendors on food safety across New Delhi. The Minister conferred prizes to cleanest Mega Food Parks and Cold Chains.
- **Standing with Kerala in trying times** The Ministry made big efforts to reach out to the flood affected people of Kerala during the devastating floods. The Minister promptly called a meeting of industry representatives and sought a cohesive effort towards relief for the state. The Minister spoke with Chief Minister of Kerala and promised all assistance from the Ministry. Following the call from the Minister, food processing companies made generous contributions to relief efforts. Extension of time for completion was accorded to two Mega Food Parks under implementation in the state.
- **Advances in Food Processing Technology** International Conference on Recent Advances in Food Processing Technology (iCRAFPT) was organised at Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology, Thanjavur in Tamilnadu. The conference saw encouraging participation from speakers, both national and international, and provided a strong platform for knowledge sharing and meaningful discussion among the industry, academia, researchers and farmers which

would potentially take the food sector growth to a newer heights. Over 09 overseas speakers, 77 Indian speakers, 18 food industry talks, 30 series lectures, 2 panel discussions, 8 student presentation, 605 poster presentation and 721 Abstract Publication took place in the conference which also saw release of new technologies and an expo of successful entrepreneurs groomed by IIFPT.

- **Collaboration with industry** also got a fillip in the NIFTEM-Industry Forum organised at National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management in Sonapat in Haryana. The meeting aimed to identify challenges being faced by the Indian Food Industry, to bridge industrial and academic gap by industry oriented research projects, promote science & technology collaboration based on innovation by developing new technologies, new product development, refine exciting technological infrastructure which can be commercialized in future for the development of food processing sector. On the occasion, the Minister mooted the idea of a 'Brand NIFTEM' for processed food which would be healthier, fresher and cheaper. The Minister also highlighted that NIFTEM was a one of its kind institute and had the potential to become the Harvard of food processing technology and management sector.
- **Creation of facilities at NIFTEM:** The year saw NIFTEM expanding its infrastructure and adding an Incubation centre and Food Testing Laboratory to its repertoire. The laboratory would not only serve as a Centre for certification of food products but would also undertake research and innovation for solving the problems of the food industry and the other stakeholders of the food sector. The Center would work in unison with the regulators and the policy makers for providing them all support for developing standard test protocols for various parameters of quality essential for domestic and international market and would serve as the National Reference facility in the years to come.
- **Modalities of Operation GREENS:** Operation Greens was announced in the Budget speech of 2018-19 with an outlay of Rs 500 crores to stabilize the supply of Tomato, Onion and Potato(TOP) crops and to ensure availability of TOP crops throughout the country round the year without any price volatility. A major step was taken when the Ministry declared a two pronged strategy for operationalization of the scheme which comprises of
- **Short term Price Stabilisation Measures consisting of a provision of 50% of the subsidy on** Transportation of Tomato Onion Potato(TOP) Crops from production to storage; Hiring of appropriate storage facilities for TOP Crops; and Long Term Integrated value chain development projects.
- **Capacity Building of FPOs & their consortium** Quality production Post-harvest processing facilities Agri-Logistics Marketing / Consumption Points Creation and Management of e-platform for demand and supply management of TOP Crops.
- **The Ministry declared** that organisations eligible for the grant would include State Agriculture and other Marketing Federations, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO), cooperatives, companies, Self-help groups, food processors, logistic operators, service providers, supply chain operators, retail and wholesale chains and central and state governments and their entities/organizations.
- **Better connectivity for grievance redressal:** The Ministry launched an in-house tollfree Interactive Voice Response service at 1-800-111175. People applying under various provisions of PradhanMantriKisan SAMPADA Yojana can call on this number and get their queries resolved by the concerned department.

International Outreach

- **MoFPI has made numerous** forays even at the international level by way of participation in international events and hosting of international dignitaries and representatives of foreign companies at the Ministry; prominent among these being the inauguration of SIAL Paris by Union Minister in October. Bilateral meeting was also held with the French Agriculture minister for mutual cooperation. The Minister also met representatives from French company, Soufflet and CEO Cemafruid, international experts in cold chain, refrigeration & air conditioning and discussed possibilities for collaborations and support in developing cold chain equipment testing laboratories in India.
- **Apart from this**, representatives and delegations from various nations called on the Minister to discuss opportunities of investment and participation in food processing sector.
- **Budget Provisions:** Allocation for Ministry of Food Processing Industries was doubled in the Budget 2018-19 to Rs. 1400 Crores and Rs. 500 crore was allocated for 'Operation Greens' to address price volatility of perishable commodities like Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP). The Ministry also initiated a proposal for the setting up of a Specialized Agro Processing Financial Institutions to unlock finance for establishing food processing industries. These institutions would help overcome the deterrents faced while installing food processing projects that are capital intensive and have long gestation period, by ensuring timely, accessible and affordable credit to this sector.
- **Skill Development** The Ministry launched a new sub-scheme i.e. Scheme for Human Resources and Institution – Skill Development (SHRISD) for assisting skilling infrastructure and Development of Course Curriculum with a budget outlay of Rs.27.50 Crore from 2017-18 to 2019-20 with following two components
- **1. Development of Course Curriculum / Training Module** in English, Hindi and translation of the same in recognized regional languages based on the Qualification Packs (QPs) validated by National Skill Development Corporation(NSDC) as National Occupational Standards.
- **Grants-In-Aid is provided to the eligible** Institutions upto a maximum of Rs.5.00 lakh per QP for development of training module both in print and multimedia for each job role and, up to a maximum of Rs. 0.50 lakh per QP is provided for the translation of already developed training modules in recognized regional languages as per 8th schedule.

- **2. Establishing Training Centre (TC)** / Expansion of Existing Training Centre to impart skill/ training on various job roles in food processing as per the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF).
- **Grants-In-Aid is provided at the rate of 50% of cost** of plant & machineries required for a National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) validated training module subject to maximum of Rs. 15 lakh per training module and limited to maximum two training modules per Training centre(TC).

International Year Of The Periodic Table

- **Key facts relevant for Prelims:** Russian scientist Dmitry Mendeleev published the first periodic such table in 1969. The table organizes all chemical elements by the number of protons in a given atom and other properties. There are seven rows, called periods, and 18 columns, called groups, in the table.
- **Elements in the same group** share similar properties. Those in the same period have the same number of atomic orbitals. Most elements on the table are metals divided into six broad categories – alkali metals, alkaline earths, basic metals, transition metals, lanthanides and actinides. They are located on the left, separated from the non-metals on the right by a zig-zag line.
- **Lanthanides and actinides**, often called “inner transition metals”, are commonly hived off as a separate section under the main table as including all 30 – including Uranium – would make the table too wide. The table is a useful tool for people to derive relationships between the different properties of the elements. It can also help predict the properties of new elements that have yet to be discovered or created.
- **Who maintains periodic table?** The International Union of Pure Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) is responsible for maintaining the periodic table.
- **IUPAC is an international federation** of National Adhering Organizations that represents chemists in individual countries. It is a member of the International Council for Science (ICSU). Headquarters of IUPAC is in Zürich, Switzerland. Established in 1919 as the successor of the International Congress of Applied Chemistry for the advancement of chemistry. Its members, the National Adhering Organizations, can be national chemistry societies, national academies of sciences, or other bodies representing chemists.
- **The IUPAC's Inter-divisional** Committee on Nomenclature and Symbols (IUPAC nomenclature) is the recognized world authority in developing standards for the naming of the chemical elements and compounds.
- **1001 Inventions:** UNESCO has also launched its educational initiative, 1001 Inventions: Journeys from Alchemy to Chemistry. Consisting of educational material and science experiments to help young people improve their understanding of chemistry and its numerous uses, the initiative will be brought to schools around the world during 2019.

Corruption Perception Index 2018

- **The index ranks 180 countries** and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople. It uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.
- **What is Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)?** It is a composite index that draws from 12 surveys to rank nations around the globe. It has become a benchmark gauge of perceptions of corruption and is used by analysts and investors.
- **The index is also based** on expert opinions of public sector corruption and takes note of range of factors like whether governmental leaders are held to account or go unpunished for corruption, the perceived prevalence of bribery, and whether public institutions respond to citizens' needs.
- **The Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index make the following observations:** Denmark is the world least corrupt country scoring 88 out of 100 points. Denmark is followed by New Zealand and Finland. Somalia has been ranked last with a score of 10 behind South Sudan and Syria. More than two-thirds of evaluated countries scored below 50 points, while the average score remained at last year's level of only 43 points.
- **For the first time** the United States dropped out of the top 20 and it was ranked at 22nd rank. Along with Brazil, US was placed in the watch list by Transparency International.
- **Corruption and the crisis of democracy:** Cross analysis with global democracy data reveals a link between corruption and the health of democracies. Full democracies score an average of 75 on the CPI; flawed democracies score an average of 49; hybrid regimes – which show elements of autocratic tendencies – score 35; autocratic regimes perform worst, with an average score of just 30 on the CPI.

- **More generally**, countries with high levels of corruption can be dangerous places for political opponents. Practically all of the countries where political killings are ordered or condoned by the government are rated as highly corrupt on the CPI.
- **Performance of India:** India's ranking increased from 81st in 2017 to 78 in 2018. India had slid from 79th rank in 2016.
- **Since India gears up** for general elections, there was a little significant movement in its CPI score, which moved from 40 in 2017 to 41 in 2018. In spite of spectacular public mobilisation in 2011, where citizens demanded the government to take action against corruption and advocated for the passage of the comprehensive Jan Lokpal bill, the efforts ultimately fizzled and fell flat, with little to no movement on the ground to build the specialist anti-corruption infrastructure required.
- **To make real progress against corruption and strengthen democracy around the world, Transparency International calls on all governments to:** Strengthen the institutions responsible for maintaining checks and balances over political power, and ensure their ability to operate without intimidation. Close the implementation gap between anti-corruption legislation, practice and enforcement.
- **Support civil society** organisations which enhance political engagement and public oversight over government spending, particularly at the local level. Support a free and independent media, and ensure the safety of journalists and their ability to work without intimidation or harassment.

“The Future of Rail” Report

- **It examines how** the role of rail in global transport might be elevated as a means to reduce the energy use and environmental impacts associated with transport.
- **Key findings from The Future of Rail:** Rail is among the most energy efficient modes of transport for freight and passengers – while the rail sector carries 8% of the world's passengers and 7% of global freight transport, it represents only 2% of total transport energy demand.
- **Today, three-quarters of passenger** rail transport activity takes place on electric trains, which is an increase from 60% in 2000 – the rail sector is the only mode of transport that is widely electrified today. This reliance on electricity means that the rail sector is the most energy diverse mode of transport.
- **The regions with the highest** share of electric train activity are Europe, Japan and Russia, while North and South America still rely heavily on diesel. Passenger rail is significantly more electrified than freight in almost all regions, and regions with higher reliance on urban rail and high-speed rail are those with the largest share of passenger-kilometres served by electricity. Most conventional rail networks today are located in North America, Europe, China, Russia, India, and Japan. These regions make up about 90% of global passenger movements on conventional rail with India leading at 39%, followed by China at 27%.
- **In contrast, significant** investments have been made in high-speed rail and metros. High-speed rail provides an important alternative to aviation while urban rail provides a solution to cities impacted by congestion and air pollution. Growth has been most notable in China, which has overtaken all other countries in terms of network length of both types within a single decade.
- **Focus on India:** India's railway system has played a fundamental role in the country's development, transporting people and goods throughout its vast territory, integrating markets and connecting communities. Rail passenger traffic in India has increased by almost 200% since 2000 and freight traffic by 150%, yet latent demand for mobility in India remains huge. In fact, rail activity in India is set to grow more than any other country.
- **Today, the conventional** rail system in India comprises a total route length of almost 68000 km. Metro systems exist in 10 Indian cities. A further 600 km of metro lines are planned for the next few years.
- **For now, India does not have any high-speed rail.** However, in 2015 India and Japan signed an agreement to develop a high-speed rail line connecting the cities of Ahmedabad and Mumbai, to come into operation in 2023. Seven other high-speed lines are currently under consideration. Once completed, they would connect the four cities that constitute the Golden Quadrilateral (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai) plus other intermediate cities.
- **About IEA:** Established in 1974 as per framework of the OECD. MISSION – The IEA works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its 30 member countries and beyond. Our mission is guided by four main areas of focus: energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide
- **Headquarters (Secretariat): Paris, France** A candidate country must be a member country of the OECD. But all OECD members are not IEA members (Ex:Chile, Iceland, Israel, Latvia and Slovenia).
- **To become member a candidate country must demonstrate that it has:** crude oil and/or product reserves equivalent to 90 days of the previous year's net imports, to which the government has immediate access (even if it does not own them directly) and could be used to address disruptions to global oil supply
- **a demand restraint programme** to reduce national oil consumption by up to 10% legislation and organisation to operate the Co-ordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM) on a national basis legislation and measures to ensure that all oil companies under its jurisdiction report information upon request; measures in place to ensure the capability of contributing its share of an IEA collective action.

- **IEA mandate:** To focus on the "3Es" of effectual energy policy: Energy security Economic development Environmental protection
- **Reports:** Global Energy & CO2 Status Report 2017. World Energy Outlook. World Energy Statistics 2017. World Energy Balances 2017. Energy Technology Perspectives.

Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development

- **The centre has been opened** by the Italian government in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).
- **About the Centre:** The centre would facilitate coordination among the G7 and African countries on common initiatives in Africa to achieve the goals set by the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.
- **The Centre would** contribute towards addressing the needs of Africa by providing a platform for G7 countries to steer their cooperation to contrast environmental degradation and promote sustainable economic growth in the region.
- **The centre will provide** a fast-track, demand-driven mechanism for African countries to access grant resources that support policies, initiatives, and best practices on climate change, food security, access to water, clean energy, and accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa.
- **The centre would be hosted** by UNDP which would utilise its extensive country office network and programmatic hubs, and global expertise and knowledge, to enable the African countries to access the resources available through it.

Effects of global warming on El Niño in the 21st Century

- **Highlights of the study:** As per the study, though the theater of action for El Niño is the tropical Pacific Ocean, its global reach costs the global community tens of billion dollars each time. El Niño may impact weather phenomenon across the world. For Eg: The eagerly-awaited winter rain and snow storms over California did not occur over California during the latest extreme El Niño.
- **The study notes that strong** El Niño's and thus extreme weather events associated with such strong El Niño's will increase in the coming decades. This should serve as a warning to the countries on all continents that suffer from these extreme weather events.
- **However, available data** is not sufficient to say with confidence how the tropical Pacific has responded to global warming till now. It is unclear if the impact of global warming on El Niño can easily be extracted considering its intrinsic tendencies and the fact that it depends on so many factors that are not easily predictable.
- **In this context**, it is imperative that models be held to very stringent standards on their performance of El Niño behaviour during historic periods, especially the 20th century, as a test of their reliability for future projections.
- **This would also be necessary** for projecting other events such as droughts and floods. For example, droughts over India are closely tied with El Niño and any projections of how droughts will respond to global warming will depend on how models perform in their historic depiction of El Niños as well as monsoons and how reliably they can project El Niño response to global warming in addition to how the models perform in reproducing floods to and droughts of 20th century.
- **Need of the hour:** Develop strong and accurate models to study El Niño and effects of global warming on it. This would also be necessary for projecting other events such as droughts and floods.
- **What is ENSO?** ENSO is nothing but El Nino Southern Oscillation. As the name suggests, it is an irregular periodic variation of wind and sea surface temperature that occurs over the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean. ENSO affects the tropics (the regions surrounding the equator) and the subtropics (the regions adjacent to or bordering the tropics). The warming phase of ENSO is called El Nino, while the cooling phase is known as La Nina.
- **What is El Nino?** El Nino is a climatic cycle characterised by high air pressure in the Western Pacific and low air pressure in the eastern. In normal conditions, strong trade winds travel from east to west across the tropical Pacific, pushing the warm surface waters towards the western Pacific. The surface temperature could witness an increase of 8 degrees Celsius in Asian waters. At the same time, cooler waters rise up towards the surface in the eastern Pacific on the coasts of Ecuador, Peru, and Chile. This process called upwelling aids in the development of a rich ecosystem.

- **What causes El Nino?** El Nino sets in when there is anomaly in the pattern. The westward-blowing trade winds weaken along the Equator and due to changes in air pressure, the surface water moves eastwards to the coast of northern South America. The central and eastern Pacific regions warm up for over six months and result in an El Nino condition. The temperature of the water could rise up to 10 degrees Fahrenheit above normal. Warmer surface waters increase precipitation and bring above-normal rainfall in South America, and droughts to Indonesia and Australia.
- **What are El Nino's effects?** El Nino affects global weather. It favours eastern Pacific hurricanes and tropical storms. Record and unusual rainfall in Peru, Chile and Ecuador are linked to the climate pattern.
- **El Nino reduces** upwelling of cold water, decreasing the uplift of nutrients from the bottom of the ocean. This affects marine life and sea birds. The fishing industry is also affected. Drought caused by El Nino can be widespread, affecting southern Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Australia, and the Pacific Islands. Countries dependent on agriculture are affected.
- **Australia and Southeast Asia get hotter.** A recent WHO report on the health consequences of El Nino forecasts a rise in vector-borne diseases, including those spread by mosquitoes, in Central and South America. Cycles of malaria in India are also linked to El Nino.

Institutions in News- Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC):

- **Why in News?** Punit Goenka is the new chairman of BARC.
- **About BARC:** It is a collaborative Industry Company founded in 2010 by stakeholder bodies that represent Broadcasters, Advertisers, and Advertising and Media Agencies.
- **BARC India** was set up as per guidelines of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India. Promoters of BARC India are Indian Broadcasting Foundation, Indian Society of Advertisers and Advertising Agencies Association of India.
- **BARC India** has evolved a transparent, accurate, and inclusive TV audience measurement system on the foundation of robust and future-ready technology backbone. Together with the audience measurement system, BARC India provides a suite of Insight products designed for Broadcasters, Advertisers and Agencies. The data generated and the insights provided by BARC India aids in making efficient decision making by the stakeholders.

Institutions in News- National Statistical Commission:

- **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.

Aber- the new digital currency:

- **Context:** The central banks of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have launched a common digital currency called 'Aber', which will be used in financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies.

- **The use of the currency** will be restricted to a limited number of banks in each state. In case that no technical obstacles are encountered, economic and legal requirements for future uses will be considered.

Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC):

- **The HSFC**, the hub of ISRO's future manned missions, was inaugurated at ISRO headquarters in Bengaluru.
- **HSFC shall** be responsible for the implementation of Gaganyaan project — which involves mission planning, development of engineering systems for crew survival in space, crew selection and training and also pursue activities for sustained human space flight missions.

Cow urine may be adding to global warming: Context: A study says cow urine may be adding to global warming. How?

- **The urine** from the ruminant is a source of nitrous oxide emissions (N₂O), a gas that is 300 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. Most times, when cow urine is used in degraded pastures, N₂O emissions are tripled.
- **The cattle** and livestock are a significant source of methane, a greenhouse gas, and therefore a contributor to global warming, is well-known. However, the role of cow urine is less understood.
- **How vulnerable is India?** Dung and urine are commonly mixed together for manure in Indian fields. Since, India also hosts the world's largest livestock population, as well as significant tracts of degraded land, the findings may have a bearing on nitrogen emissions from Indian fields.
- **A 2012 satellite** study by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said that about 30% of India's geographical area (or about 96.4 million hectares) is degraded. Degraded pastures not only affect food security and the livelihood of farmers today, but affect the livelihood of future farmers because they emit more gases that cause global warming.
- **Degraded grasslands** emitted more N₂O than healthy pastures because the vegetation in the latter took up some of the reactive nitrogen compounds and only the leftovers were emitted.

The case for minimum basic income:

- **Context:** The editorial discusses about the need for minimum basic income, its feasibility, success models and the need.
- **What are income transfers?** They are unconditional income supplements to compensate for policy failures and ease the economic anxieties of the less advantaged.
- **Why provide income support?** The benefits of reforms since 1991 are not equally shared. The disproportionate share of gains from the reforms have gone to middle-class and rich Indians. Agriculture and other segments of the economy that engage poor and rural Indians are often left out. This unevenness in development calls for a superior economic growth model. Until that happens, redistributive policy interventions such as income transfers can improve equity.
- **The advantage** of a minimum income guarantee is that it will also cover the urban poor. While job guarantee programmes, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, lock up beneficiaries in low-productivity work, income supplements allow them to continue to look for better employment options.
- **Success models:** Telangana and Odisha are already experimenting in a limited way with income support schemes, focused on the farm sector. Rythu Bandhu: In Telangana, the government is providing farmers income support payment at the rate of ₹10,000/ha (₹4,000/acre). However, this model benefits the biggest landowners the most, including those who lease out their land. Tenants, sharecroppers and landless labourers, the most vulnerable, are out of its coverage. Its

success depends on reliable land records.

- **Odisha's recently** notified KALIA (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Assistance) irons out these creases. It proposes to transfer ₹5,000 in cash per season (₹10,000 per year for double-cropped land) to the State's 30 lakh marginal farmers, leaving out the two lakh large farmers. It promises cash grants of ₹12,500 each to the State's 10 lakh landless households. The hope is that they will use this money to rear goats or poultry and farm mushrooms or honey. Fisherfolk are covered too, and will receive the investment support for buying fishing nets and allied equipment.
- **Significance:** Rythu Bandhu and KALIA are superior policy interventions. Plus, they do not suffer from the moral hazard and limited reach of farm loan waivers. Waivers penalise farmers who repay loans on time and benefit only borrowers from banks.
- **Will it work?- Results of pilot project:** A pilot project conducted between 2010 and 2013, covering 6,000 beneficiaries in Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, yielded encouraging results. It confirmed that at high levels of impoverishment, even the smallest income supplement can improve nutrient intake, school enrolment and attendance of female students, and reduce incidence of indebtedness.
- **This evidence** challenges the commonly held views that welfare payments are an affront to the dignity of the beneficiaries and that they are used for questionable purposes, such as for buying alcohol.
- **How to raise funds for this?** The government cannot risk widening the fiscal deficit. Increasing the fiscal deficit hurts the poor, for it sparks off inflation and cannot be the way to fund income transfers.
- **For this**, the Centre and the States may utilize funds collected through various taxes, royalty payments and dividends from producers and consumers of petroleum products.
- **They can also** consider streamlining distortionary and demerit subsidies, such as on urea (₹70,000 crore annually). It can open up significant fiscal space. Healthcare, education, water conservation, environment and other merit subsidies need to be preserved and improved and should not be reduced to fund income transfers.
- **If the wealth tax** that the government had abolished in 2015 is reintroduced as a fair and easy-to-collect levy on the super-rich, selling politically to the middle class an income support scheme for the poor will be easier.
- **Is income support sufficient?** Providing income support should be a short- term measure. In the long run, there is need to address rural distress, which is largely a consequence of policy failures such as ineffective procurement and perverse trade and pricing policies that have in times of bumper harvests led to gluts, depressed market prices, and aggravated farmer losses.