

**ISSUE - 05**

**This fortnightly compilation is of the current affairs write-ups, written by the faculty of Manifest IAS, which covers both static and current dimensions of important issues for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week of November 2019**

**The write-ups can also be found in the current affairs section on our website: <https://www.manifestias.com>**

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## SNIPPETS FOR PRELIMS

### Overseas Citizens of India permitted to enroll in National Pension System

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

#### Key highlights

- The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has permitted overseas citizens of India (OCIs) to enroll in the National Pension System/Scheme.

- Finance Ministry in a notification said that OCI may subscribe to NPS provided such person is eligible to invest as per the provisions of the PFRDA Act and the accumulated saving will be repatriable, subject to Foreign Exchange Management Act guidelines
- However, the option of the NPS Tier II account will not be available to NRI and OCI subscribers.

#### What is the National Pension Scheme?

- The national pension scheme is a voluntary, contribution-based pension scheme, which aims to provide old age security to Indian citizens
- The annuity or accumulated savings under the scheme may be repatriable (that is, it can be moved outside India) subject to the guidelines under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999.

### Who can register for OCI?

A foreign national (except foreign nationals from Bangladesh or Pakistan) can register for OCI if they were:

1. Eligible to become a citizen of India at the commencement of the constitution
2. Citizen of India on, or at any time after the commencement of the constitution
3. Belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15th August 1947, or
4. Who is a child or grandchild of such a person

## SEBI's framework for the issue of Depository Receipts

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) notified the framework for the issue of depository receipts

### What are Depository receipts?

Depository receipts are foreign currency-denominated instruments listed on an international exchange. These are instruments issued by a foreign depository and transferred to a domestic custodian (entity holding the securities). These requirements are in addition to the requirements under the Depository Receipts Scheme, 2014.

### The Framework

- Under the framework, only listed companies (companies registered in India and listed on a stock exchange in India) are permitted to issue securities for the purpose of issuing depository receipts.
- The listed companies will be subject to certain conditions. Any director or promotor of the company should not be a wilful defaulter or a fugitive economic offender, and not be debarred from accessing the capital market by SEBI.
- Under the framework, existing holders of securities will also be eligible to transfer their securities for issuing depository receipts. The

conditions for listed companies will also apply to existing holders.

- Listed companies can issue or transfer securities for the purpose of the issue of depository receipts only in permissible jurisdictions. The list of permissible jurisdiction is notified by the central government from time to time.
- As per the Depository Receipts Scheme, 2014, permissible jurisdictions include only members of the Financial Action Task Force (for example: Japan, the United States, Germany, and China).
- Recently, the central government has amended the Depository Receipts Scheme, 2014 to include the International Financial Services Centre in India as a permissible jurisdiction under the scheme

## Inter-Ministerial Committee on money laundering

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

Recently the Ministry of Finance constituted an Inter Ministerial Co-ordination Committee on money laundering

### Key highlights

- The Committee has been **set up under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002**, which allows the central government to constitute an inter-ministerial coordination committee for cooperation and coordination between relevant agencies
- The terms of reference of the Committee include:
  - Operational co-operation between the government, law enforcement agencies, regulators and the Financial Intelligence Unit – India (under the Ministry of Finance)
  - Consultation among the authorities with the financial sector
  - Developing and implementing policies on anti-money laundering or countering the financing of terrorism.

### Composition:

- The 19-member committee will be chaired by the Revenue Secretary. Other members of the Committee include the:
  - Secretaries of Department of Economic Affairs, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and Ministry of External Affairs
  - Chairman SEBI

- Deputy Governor RBI, and
- Director Intelligence Bureau.

## Revised procedure for strategic disinvestment of CPSEs

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The Union Cabinet approved changes in the procedure for strategic disinvestment of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs)

### Key highlights

- **Earlier, NITI Aayog was responsible** for identifying CPSEs for strategic disinvestment and advising on the number of shares to be sold
- As per the revised procedure, these functions will be performed by a Consultative Group, which consists of the Secretaries of:
  1. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management
  2. (DIPAM)
  3. The administrative Ministry
  4. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs
  5. The Department of Public Enterprises, and
  6. CEO, NITI Aayog
- The Group's recommendations will be examined and executed by an Inter-Ministerial Group which will be co-chaired by the Secretary, DIPAM, and the Secretary of the administrative Ministry. Earlier, only the administrative Ministry was responsible for these functions.
- Application: The revised procedure will apply to cases where the financial bids have not been invited or must be invited again due to the failure of the previous transaction. Note that DIPAM has invited proposals to engage advisors who would carry out undertaking detailed analysis for the restructuring of CPSEs

## Committee of Officers to suggest measures for increasing GST revenue

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The GST Council constituted a Committee of Officers to suggest measures for increasing GST revenue

### Key highlights

### Areas of Consideration

The Council has suggested the following areas for consideration:

1. Systemic changes including checks and balances
2. Policy measures and relevant changes needed in laws
3. Expansion of tax base
4. Improvement in voluntary compliance
5. Improvement in compliance monitoring and anti-avoidance measures using better data analytics, and better administrative coordination

In addition, the Committee has been asked to consider a wide range of reforms and give comprehensive recommendations.

### Composition

- The Committee includes five officers of the central government and five state GST commissioners from the states of Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.
- Other states can also nominate officers to the Committee or send suggestions in writing.

## Gramin Agricultural Markets-GrAMs

**Source:** Kurukshetra Magazine

### What are GrAMs?

These are defined as: "Retail agricultural markets in close proximity of the farm gate, that promote and service a more efficient transaction of the farmers' produce across the agricultural sub-sectors, by enabling both direct sale, between the producer and consumer, and aggregation of small produce-lots for subsequent transaction, both of which can occur either physically or online".

### Budget 2018-19 Announcements

- Develop and upgrade existing 22,000 rural haats into Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)
- Physical infrastructure to be strengthened using MGNREGS and other Government Schemes
- PMGSY(Phase-III) to be used for strengthening road linkages from habitations to GrAMs
- Setting up of Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund with a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore-
  1. Develop and upgrade agricultural marketing infrastructure in 22,000 GrAMs
  2. Strengthening 585 APMC markets
- GrAMs to be linked to e-NAM
- GrAMs to be outside the APMC Act regulation

## GrAMs- Principle Objectives

**They shall facilitate two following activities in principle.**

1. **Direct sale:** The farmer-producers may offer any of their **agri-produce on sale directly to the consumers without having to go through the market regulations.** The consumer could be a retail purchaser or a bulk purchaser (trader, processor, exporter, etc); and the sale can occur through a physical negotiation or via an online trade platform like e-NAM. The disintermediation of such a transaction will result in transferring maximum value to the farmer on his produce.
2. **Aggregation of the lots: The small lots of the farmer-producers can be aggregated through an institutional mechanism (like that of FPO, VPO, etc.)** for gaining enhanced bargaining power and subsequent sale either at the GrAMs via an online trade platform like e-NAM or by availing primary preparatory or preconditioning services, such as assaying, cooling, packaging, and transporting from the GrAMs to APMC/RMC or any other primary or secondary or terminal wholesale agricultural market.

### Location of GrAMs

GrAMs may be located at the existing periodical markets, which are owned and managed by different agencies and individuals, such as Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) – Gram Panchayats, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) – Town Panchayats, Municipalities, APMCs/RMCs, Trusts – Temples, WAQF, Private individuals, etc.

### Creation of Agri-Market infrastructure fund for development and upgradation of Gramin Agriculture Markets

- Recently the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs Chaired by the Prime Minister has given its approval for the creation of a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore for Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF) to be created with NABARD for development and up-gradation of agricultural marketing infrastructure in Gramin Agricultural Markets and Regulated Wholesale Markets.
- AMIF will provide the State/UT Governments subsidized loan for their proposal for developing marketing infrastructure in 585 Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and 10,000 Grameen Agricultural Markets (GrAMs).
- States may also access AMIF for innovative integrated market infrastructure projects

including Hub and Spoke model and in the Public-Private Partnership model.

- In these GrAMs, physical and basic infrastructure will be strengthened using MGNREGA and other Government Schemes.

### Advantages of GrAMs

The GrAMs shall be organisationally linked to primary wholesale agricultural markets like APMCs/RMCs, whether in the public or private sector and the two together shall provide a hub and spoke model of agricultural market structure. Some of the specific advantages of GrAMs are as follows:

1. **Reduce the cost of first-mile transportation** by offering the farmers a marketing platform in close proximity to the farm gates.
2. **Reduce the cost of the transaction and enable the farmers** to gain a higher share in the consumers' rupee by facilitating the direct sale – both physical and online.
3. **Provide an orderly and transparent system** of aggregating the small lots and substitute for the currently opaque & informal system of aggregation by the village traders.
4. **Provide small farmers the opportunity to target direct sales at markets** of their own volition by providing the associated market linkage services.
5. **Provide the greater opportunity for mobilization of farmers** through mechanisms like farmer producer organizations (FPOs-societies, cooperatives, and companies), as well as Village Producer Organisations (VPOs).
6. Offer an **integrated platform for the purchase of agri-inputs**, besides other consumer & white goods.
7. **Serve as a place for the dissemination of new information & knowledge** relating to agriculture and other aspects of life

## Revival plan for BSNL and MTNL

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The Union Cabinet approved a revival plan for BSNL and MTNL. This plan seeks to address the financial distress of these PSUs and enable them to provide quality and reliable services.

**Key features of the revival plan are as follows:**

- **The merger of BSNL and MTNL:** The Union Cabinet has given in-principle approval for the merger of BSNL and MTNL.
- **Allotment of the 4G spectrum:** 4G spectrum will be allotted to both the PSUs. The central government will fund the cost of spectrum allotment to these PSUs.
- **Reduction in debt burden:** The central government will provide sovereign guarantee to both PSUs for raising longterm bonds of Rs 15,000 crore. The funds raised by this exercise will be used for restructuring the existing debt and, partly meeting capital as well as operational expenditure requirements. Both the PSUs will monetize their assets. The funds received from monetization will be used in meeting capital and operational expenditure requirements.
- **Reduction in salary burden:** To reduce the salary burden of both PSUs, they will offer a **Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) to their employees, aged 50 years and above. The cost of the VRS scheme will be provided by the central government.** The employees seeking voluntary retirement under the scheme will be eligible for a **one-time compensation.** In addition, the central government will also cover costs towards pension, gratuity and, commutation of benefits.

## Revised guidelines for charging infrastructure for electric vehicles

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The Ministry of Power released revised guidelines and standards for charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. The original guidelines were released in December 2018

**The key changes from the original guidelines are:**

- **Safety standards:** The earlier guidelines required private charging stations (at residences and offices) to meet specified performance and technical standards. The revised guidelines require them to also comply with specified safety standards.
- **Public charging stations:** The earlier guidelines required the public charging stations to install all five specified charger models. The revised guidelines require charging stations to install only one or more types of specified charger models.

Charging stations for e-two/three-wheelers will be allowed to install any charger model other than the specified ones, subject to standards set by the Central Electricity Authority.

- **Standalone battery swapping facility removed:** The earlier guidelines allowed public charging stations to provide standalone battery swapping facility. This provision has been removed from the revised guidelines.
- **The ceiling on tariff removed:** The Central or State Electricity Regulatory Commissions determine the tariff for supply of electricity to the public charging stations. Earlier guidelines specified that the tariff will not be more than the average cost of supply plus 15%. This ceiling on the tariff has been removed under the revised guidelines. Further, a separate metering arrangement will be made for public charging stations.
- **Central nodal agency specified:** Under the revised guidelines, the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency has been specified as the central nodal agency** for rolling out the public charging infrastructure in the country.

## National Counter Rogue Drone guidelines

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The Ministry of Civil Aviation released the National Counter Rogue Drone guidelines. The guidelines seek to highlight the potential threat from the unregulated use of drones and the measures to mitigate such threats.

### Classification of Drones

Drones (for civil use) are classified by their maximum take-off weight, as follows:

- Nano (less than or equal to 250 gm)
- Micro (between 250 gm and 2 kg)
- Small (between 2 kg and 25 kg)
- Medium (between 25 kg and 150 kg), and
- Large (greater than 150 kg)

### Key features of the guidelines

**Rogue applications:** While the illegal use of micro-drones may be limited to photography and surveillance, the small to large drones may be misused for carrying explosives with surveillance capacities. Such misuses may also include:

- Delivering weapons

- Airspace interference
- Attacks on people or property
- Conveying signals and propaganda messages, and
- Delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction

**Types of rogue drones:** Drones used for illicit targeting may include:

- **Autonomous drones** (controlled by on-board computers to navigate to a fixed target)
- **Drone swarms** (several drones controlled together as one unit), and
- **Stealth drones** (these can reduce their radar signature making it difficult to detect them).

**Countering rogue drones:** An effective system to counter such drones should be able to detect and continuously track drones with certain peculiarities such as:

- Minimal infrared signatures
- Limited radio frequency, and
- Low acoustic emissions. However, challenges to detecting such drones include difficulty in differentiating regular and rogue drones and less reaction time.

**Institutional set up:**

- Multiple agencies (such as Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Civil Aviation) are involved in protection against sub-conventional aerial threats. Therefore, a **Steering Committee** should be set up at the national level to evolve a counter rogue drone framework and advise the concerned Ministries.
- **The Committee will also regulate commercial civil drone applications in the country. It will include members from the:**
  - Indian Air Force
  - Ministries of Home Affairs and Civil Aviation, and
  - Intelligence agencies.
  - It will be assisted by an Implementation Committee for regular monitoring of threats and implementation of the counter rogue drone measures.

## Draft Seeds Bill to replace the Seeds Act, 1966

Source: PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has released the draft Seeds Bill, 2019. The draft Bill seeks to regulate the quality of seeds during their

production, distribution, sale, import, and export. The proposed bill seeks to replace the Seeds Act, 1966

### Key features of the draft bill

**Registration:**

- All varieties of seeds being sold for the purpose of sowing or planting must be registered, except farmers' varieties.
- Farmers' varieties are varieties which have been traditionally cultivated and evolved by the farmers in their fields or are similar to varieties about which farmers have common knowledge.
- Seeds produced by farmers, other than those for sale under a brand name, are also not required to be registered.
- Transgenic varieties of seeds (which are developed by modifying the genetic composition of other varieties) can be registered only after applicants obtain a clearance under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

**Standards by the central government**

- The central government may notify minimum limits of germination, genetic and physical purity, and seed health for any seed variety.
- Additional standards may be specified for transgenic varieties.
- **These standards will not apply to seeds produced by farmers**, other than those for sale under a brand name.

**Compensation to farmers:**

- If a registered variety of seed fails to perform to expected standards (as disclosed by the producer, distributor, or vendor), the farmer can claim compensation from the producer, dealer, distributor or vendor under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

**Offences and penalties:**

- Persons who contravene any provision of the Bill and sell seeds which do not conform to the specified standards will be punished with a fine between Rs 25,000 and one lakh rupees.
- Persons furnishing false information regarding standards, misbrand seeds, or supplying seeds which are spurious or not registered, will be punished with up to one-year imprisonment, or with a fine of up to five lakh rupees, or both.

## Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)



**Source:** Kurukshetra Magazine

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa, and bamboo.

### Main objectives of the Mission are:

- Promote holistic growth of horticulture sector, including bamboo and coconut through area based regionally differentiated strategies, which includes research, technology promotion, extension, post-harvest management, processing, and marketing, in consonance with comparative advantage of each State/region and its diverse agro-climatic features
- Encourage aggregation of farmers into farmer groups like FIGs/FPOs and FPCs to bring the economy of scale and scope.
- Enhance horticulture production, augment farmers, income and strengthen nutritional security;
- Improve productivity by way of quality germplasm, planting material and water use efficiency through Micro Irrigation.
- Support skill development and create employment generation opportunities for rural youth in horticulture and post-harvest management, especially in the cold chain sector.

### Sub schemes of the Mission

SL.	Sub Scheme	Target group/ area
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No.		of operation
1	National Horticulture Mission (NHM)	All states & UTs except states in NE and Himalayan Region.
2	Horticulture Mission for North East & Himalayan States (HMNEH)	All states in NE and Himalayan Region.
3	National Horticulture Board (NHB)	All states & UTs focusing on commercial horticulture
4	Coconut Development Board (CDB)	All States and UTs where coconut is grown.
5	Central Institute for Horticulture (CIH)	NE states, focusing on HRD and capacity building

### Funding

- While the Government of India (GOI) contributes 85% of the total outlay for developmental programmes in all the states except the states in North East and the Himalayas, 15% share is contributed by State Governments.
- In the case of the North-Eastern States and the Himalayan States, GOI contribution is 100%.
- Similarly, for the development of bamboo and programmes of National Horticulture Board (NHB), Coconut Development Board (CDB), Central Institute for Horticulture (CIH), Nagaland and the National Level Agencies (NLA), GOI contribution will be 100%.

## National Food Security Mission

**Source:** Kurukshetra Magazine

### Background

National Food Security Mission was launched in 2007-08 to increase the production of rice, wheat and pulses by 10, 8 and 2 million tonnes, respectively by the end of XI Plan through area expansion and productivity enhancement; restoring soil fertility and productivity; creating employment opportunities; and enhancing farm level economy. The Mission is being continued during 12th Five Year Plan with a new target of additional production of 25 million tonnes of food grains comprising of 10 million tonnes rice, 8



million tonnes of wheat, 4 million tonnes of pulses and 3 million tonnes of coarse cereals by the end of XII Plan

### Major components of NFSM

1. National Food Security Mission – Rice (NFSM-Rice)
2. National Food Security Mission – Wheat (NFSM-Wheat)
3. National Food Security Mission – Pulses (NFSM-Pulses)
4. National Food Security Mission – Coarse cereals (NFSM-Coarse cereals)
5. National Food Security Mission – Nutri cereals (NFSM- Nutri cereals)
6. National Food Security Mission – Commercial crops (NFSM-Commercial crops)
7. National Food Security Mission – Oilseeds and Oilpalm (NFSM-Oilseeds)
8. National Food Security Mission – Seed village programme

### Objectives

- Increasing production of rice, wheat, pulses, and coarse cereals through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a sustainable manner in the identified districts of the country
- Restoring soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level
- Enhancing farm level economy (i.e. farm profits) to restore confidence amongst the farmers

### Strategy

To achieve the above objectives, the Mission would adopt the following strategies:

- Focus on low productivity and high potential districts including cultivation of food grain crops in rainfed areas.
- Implementation of cropping system-centric interventions in a Mission mode approach through active engagement of all the stakeholders at various levels.
- Agro-climatic zone wise planning and cluster approach for crop productivity enhancement.
- Focus on pulse production through the utilization of rice fallow, rice bunds and intercropping of pulses with coarse cereals, oilseeds and commercial crops (sugarcane, cotton, jute).
- Promotion and extension of improved technologies i.e., seed, integrated nutrient management (INM) including micronutrients, soil amendments, integrated pest management (IPM),

input use efficiency and resource conservation technologies along with the capacity building of the farmers/extension functionaries.

- Close monitoring of the flow of funds to ensure timely reach of interventions to the target beneficiaries.
- Integration of various proposed interventions and targets with the district plan of each identified district.
- Constant monitoring and concurrent evaluation by the implementing agencies for assessing the impact of the interventions for a result-oriented approach.

**Funding pattern:** From the year 2015-16, the mission is being implemented on 60:40 sharing pattern between Centre and State Governments and on 90:10 sharing pattern between Centre and Northeastern & 3 Hill states.

## Report of the Working Group on Group Insolvency

**Source:** PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The Working Group on group insolvency (Chair: Mr. U. K. Sinha) submitted its report to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India

### Background

The Working Group was constituted to examine issues arising under The Insolvency and Banking Code, 2016 in Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes (CIRPs) where a distressed company is linked to other group companies

### Key observations and recommendations include:

- **Need for a common framework:** The Working Group noted that the Code does not have a common framework for resolving situations in which interlinked companies are going through CIRPs. In these cases, treating the insolvency of each group company in an isolated manner might be expensive, and might result in creditors realizing lesser value.
- **Proposed framework:** The Working Group recommended that the definition of 'corporate group' include holding, subsidiary, and associate companies. The adjudicating authority may include other groups not covered in the definition. The Working Group suggested a comprehensive

framework for group insolvency, that would start with a procedural coordination mechanism in the first phase.

- **Elements of the proposed framework:** Elements of the proposed framework may include:
  - A joint application against all corporate debtors who have defaulted and are part of a group
  - A single insolvency professional and a single adjudicating authority, and
  - The creation of a group creditors' committee. These may be voluntary. Exceptions may be allowed in certain cases, including those where stakeholders would get adversely affected. Cooperation, communication and information sharing among insolvency professionals, creditors' committee, and adjudicating authorities must be mandatory.
- **Phased implementation:** The Working Group recommended that the framework for group insolvency may be introduced in a phased manner. In the first phase, only domestic companies may be covered, and only procedural consolidation mechanisms may be implemented.

## SEBI's cyber security Framework for KYC registration agencies

Source: PRS, Monthly Policy Review

### Who are (Know Your Customer) registration agencies?

These are entities registered with the SEBI (under the KYC Registration Agency Regulations, 2011) which maintain KYC records of investors

### Why the framework?

SEBI noted that these agencies should have a robust cyber security and resilience framework since they perform an important role of maintaining KYC records of customers in security markets.

### About the Framework

Cyber security frameworks include measures and processes intended to prevent cyber-attacks and improve cyber resilience.

### Key features of the framework include:

- **Comprehensive policy:** KYC registration agencies should formulate a comprehensive cyber security

and resilience policy which should include processes to:

- Identify critical risks
- Protect critical assets
- Detect cyber-attacks and
- Respond and recover from such incidents.
- **Governance & chief information security officer:** KYC registration agencies should designate a senior official as chief information security officer, who will:
  - Assess, identify and reduce cyber security risks
  - Identify appropriate standards and controls, and
  - Direct implementation of processes as per the cyber security policy.
    - The board of such KYC agencies should constitute a technology committee comprising of experts. This committee will review the implementation of cyber security policy on a quarterly basis.
    - **Access control:** Access to registration agencies' systems, applications, databases should be for a defined purpose and a defined period. Physical access to critical systems should be restricted to the minimum and be monitored through controls such as CCTV cameras and card access systems.
    - **Sharing of information:** Quarterly reports containing information on cyber-attacks and threats, and measures taken to mitigate vulnerabilities should be submitted to SEBI

## Banks to lend to Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)

Source: PRS, Monthly Policy Review

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has permitted banks to lend to Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs). So far, banks were only permitted to invest in units of InvITs, but not lend to them

### What are Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)?

- InvITs are collective insurance schemes similar to a mutual fund, which enables direct investment of money from individual and institutional investors in infrastructure projects to earn a small portion of the income as return.
- The InvIT is designed as a tiered structure with Sponsor setting up the InvIT which in turn invests

into the eligible infrastructure projects either directly or via special purpose vehicles (SPVs).

- The InvITs are regulated by the SEBI (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014.

### Conditions for lending

The lending will be subjected to certain conditions.

These include:

- Banks should not lend to those InvITs where any underlying special purpose vehicle is facing financial difficulty
- Banks should put in place a board-approved policy on exposures to InvITs which should cover sanctioning conditions, and monitoring mechanism, among other details, and
- Banks should undertake an assessment of all critical parameters including the sufficiency of cash flows to ensure timely debt servicing.
- Further, the audit committee of the board of the banks should review compliance to the above conditions on a half-yearly basis

## Conservation Agriculture

**Source:** Kurukshetra Magazine, Food & Agriculture Organization of the UN

### What is Conservation Agriculture(CA)?

Conservation Agriculture is a farming system that promotes maintenance of a permanent soil cover, minimum soil disturbance (i.e. no tillage), and diversification of plant species. It enhances biodiversity and natural biological processes above and below the ground surface, which contributes to increased water and nutrient use efficiency and to improved and sustained crop production.

### Three principles of CA

- **Minimum mechanical soil disturbance (i.e. no tillage) through direct seed and/or fertilizer placement:** Direct seeding involves growing crops without mechanical seedbed preparation and with minimal soil disturbance since the harvest of the previous crop
- **Permanent soil organic cover(at least 30 percent) with crop residues and/or cover crops:** Keeping the soil covered is a fundamental principle of CA. Crop residues are left on the soil surface, but cover crops may be needed if the gap is too long between harvesting one crop and establishing the next

- Species diversification through varied crop sequences and associations involving at least three different crops: The rotation of crops is not only necessary to offer a diverse “diet” to the soil micro organisms, but as they root at different soil depths, they are capable of exploring different soil layers for nutrients. Nutrients that have been leached to deeper layers and that are no longer available for the commercial crop can be “recycled” by the crops in rotation. This way the rotation crops function as biological pumps

### Significance and benefits of CA

- CA facilitates good agronomy, such as timely operations, and improves overall land husbandry for rainfed and irrigated production.
- Complemented by other known good practices, including the use of quality seeds, and integrated pest, nutrient, weed and water management, etc., CA is a base for sustainable agricultural production intensification.
- It opens increased options for integration of production sectors, such as crop-livestock integration and the integration of trees and pastures into agricultural landscapes.

## Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme

**Source:** NABARD, Kurukshetra

The Department of Animal Husbandry, dairying, and fisheries (Ministry of Agriculture) is implementing Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme (DEDS) for generating self-employment opportunities in the dairy sector, covering activities such as enhancement of milk production, procurement, preservation, transportation, processing and marketing of milk by providing back-ended capital subsidy for bankable projects. **The scheme is being implemented by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)**

### Objectives of the scheme

- To promote setting up of modern dairy farms for the production of clean milk
- To encourage heifer calf rearing, thereby conserving good breeding stock
- To bring structural changes in the unorganized sector so that initial processing of milk can be taken up at the village level itself

- To upgrade the quality and traditional technology to handle milk on a commercial scale
- To generate self-employment and provide infrastructure mainly for unorganized sector

#### Who can benefit from this scheme?

- Farmers, individual entrepreneurs, NGOs, companies, groups of organized and unorganized sectors, etc. Groups of the organized sector include Self-help Groups (SHGs), dairy cooperative societies, milk unions, milk federations, etc.
- An individual will be eligible to avail assistance for all the components under the scheme but only once for each component
- More than one member of a family can be assisted under the scheme provided they set up separate units with separate infrastructure at different locations. The distance between the boundaries of two such farms should be at least 500 metres.

#### Pattern Assistance

- Back ended capital subsidy @25% of the project cost for general category and @33% for SC/ST farmers. The component wise subsidy ceiling will be subjected to indicative cost arrived at by NABARD from time to time
- Entrepreneur Contribution (Margin) for loans beyond Rs. 1 lakh\* – 10% of the project cost (\*subject to any revision in RBI guidelines)

## Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)

**Source:** Kurukshetra Magazine

The RWBCIS was launched on 18th February 2016 by the Prime Minister of India

#### Aim of Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme

Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS) aims to mitigate the hardship of the insured farmers against the likelihood of financial loss on account of anticipated crop loss resulting from adverse weather conditions relating to rainfall, temperature, wind, humidity, etc.

#### Key features

##### Crops covered

- Major Food crops (Cereals, Millets & Pulses) & Oilseeds
- Commercial / Horticultural crops

##### Farmers covered

- All farmers including sharecroppers and tenant farmers growing the notified crops in the notified areas are eligible for coverage. However, farmers should have an insurable interest on the insured crop. The non-loanee farmers are required to submit necessary documentary evidence of land records and/or applicable contract/agreements details (in case of sharecroppers/tenant farmers).
- All farmers availing Seasonal Agricultural Operations (SAO) loans from Financial Institutions (i.e. loanee farmers) for the crop(s) notified are covered on a compulsory basis.
- The Scheme is optional for the non-loanee farmers. They can choose between WBCIS and PMFBY, and also the insurance company.

#### Perils covered

Following major weather perils, which are deemed to cause "Adverse Weather Incidence", leading to crop loss, shall be covered under the scheme.

- Rainfall – Deficit Rainfall, Excess rainfall, Unseasonal Rainfall, Rainy days, Dry-spell, Dry days
- Relative Humidity
- Temperature – High temperature (heat), Low temperature
- Wind Speed
- A combination of the above
- Hailstorms, cloud-burst may also be covered as Add-on/Index-Plus products for those farmers who have already taken normal coverage under WBCIS.

#### Risk period

The risk period would ideally be from the sowing period to the maturity of the crop. The risk period depending on the duration of the crop and weather parameters chosen could vary with individual crop and reference unit area and would be notified by SLCCCI before the commencement of the risk period.

#### Premium rates

**The revised premium rates payable by the cultivator for different crops are as follows:**

Crops	Maximum Insurance charges payable by the farmer (% of Sum Insured)
Season – Kharif – Food & Oilseeds crops (all cereals, millets, & oilseeds, pulses)	2.0% of SI or Actuarial rate, whichever is less
Season – Rabi – Food &	1.5% of SI or Actuarial

Oilseeds crops (all cereals, millets, & oilseeds, pulses)	rate, whichever is less
Season – Rabi and Kharif – Annual Commercial / Annual Horticultural crops	5% of SI or Actuarial rate, whichever is less

The 'net premium payable in case of the insured loanee cultivator is financed by the Lending Bank.

### Insurance companies participating in WBCIS

The public sector and private sector General Insurance Companies empanelled by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation (DAC) and Farmers Welfare, Government of India and selected by concerned State Government / Union Territory (UT) implement WBCIS.

## E-Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (E-NWR)

**Source:** Kurukshetra Magazine

E-NWR was launched by the Central Warehousing Corporation. Introduction of the e-NWR was part of the digitalization of registration, monitoring, and surveillance of e-NWR

### What are Negotiable Warehouse Receipts?

Warehouse Receipts are documents issued by warehouses to depositors against the commodities deposited in the warehouses, for which the warehouse is the bailee

In India, the term 'negotiable warehouse receipt' is defined in Section 2(m) of the Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007 (WDR Act), which came into force from 25 October 2010. WDR Act provides for the issuance of Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (NWRs) by the warehouses registered under this Act. Section 2(m) defines a **"negotiable warehouse receipt" to mean** a warehouse receipt under which the goods represented therein are deliverable to the depositor or order, the endorsement of which has the effect of the transfer of goods represented thereby and the endorsee for which takes a good title"

### Key benefits of E-NWR

- Under e-NWR farmers and traders would get better and transparent access to the market
- e-NWRs would have no chances of any tempering, mutilation, fudging, loss or damage and with no possibility of any multiple financing.

- Hence, these NWRs will not only facilitate an **easy pledge financing by banks and other financial institutions** but also **smooth trading on various trading centres** like commodity exchanges, electronic National Agriculture Markets (e-NAM) and other electronic platforms.
- Warehouse receipts in the form of an e-NWR issued by the warehousemen to customers against commodities deposited for storage can now be used for availing of financial facilities from financial institutions, without any difficulty.
- These e-NWRs will save expenditure in logistics as the stocks could be traded through multiple buyers without physical movement and can be even split for partial transfer or withdrawal.
- **With the introduction of e-NWR, depositors of stocks can now avail of the benefit without visiting the warehouse** where they are depositing the stocks and they can simply make transactions even at their doorstep.
- These initiatives would revolutionize the marketing of agricultural commodities and help farmers realize better price for their produce which will be a step towards doubling the farmers' income by 2022 as well as Digital India mission

## National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP)

**Source:** Kurukshetra Magazine

India is one of the major oilseeds grower and importer of edible oils. India's vegetable oil economy is the world's fourth-largest after USA, China & Brazil. But a substantial portion of our requirement of edible oil is met through import of palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia hence government of India implemented the National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP) during the 12th Five Year Plan, to expand the oil palm areas and increase the production of edible oils

### Key features of the Mission

#### Mini Missions and their targets

The NMOOP was launched under Mini Missions (MM) I, II & III to achieve the following specific targets;

- **Under the MM-I**, the mission aims to increase the production of oilseeds to 35.51 million tonnes from the current average production of 28.93 million tonnes of oilseeds.
- **Under the MM-II**, the mission's target is to broaden the area for oil palm cultivation and boost

the production of Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFBs) from 4927 kg/ha to 15,000 kg/ha.

- **MM-III envisages** to strengthen the seed collection of Tree Borne Oilseeds (TBOs) such as olive, sal, mahua, kokum, wild apricot, Tung, etc., from 9 lakh tonnes to 14 lakh tonnes and provide best planting materials for the expanded areas.

### Purpose of the Mini Missions

#### Mini Mission-I (Oil Seeds)

- The mission citing the importance of oil palm was launched in 12 potential states in India with the listed purpose,
- To bring 75,000 hectares area under palm cultivation and increase the production of edible oils
- To promote oil palms in all Northern-Eastern states
- To address the demand for new oil palm plantations both from native and imported sources
- To render assistance to farmers by providing planting materials, maintenance cost for palms, irrigation & bore well, and harvesting tools.
- To buy Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB) from farmers through processing industries
- To provide profitable rates for FFBs when international Crude Palm Oil (CPO) price drops
- To support farmers through Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)

#### Mini Mission-II (Oil Palm)

- To increase the Seed Replacement Ratio (SSR) with a focus on the Varietal Replacement.
- To raise the area of irrigation of the Oilseeds from 26% to 36%.
- To encourage the inter-cropping of oilseeds with cereals/pulses and sugarcane.
- To increase the availability of quality and efficient planting materials of Oil Palm and Tree Borne Oilseeds (TBOs).

#### Mini Mission-III (Tree Borne Oilseeds (TBOs)).

NMOOP implements the Mini Mission-III either through the Departments of Agriculture of the State Governments or the Department of Horticulture and it focuses on,

- Expanding the plantation area.
- Providing proper maintenance of the seedlings.
- Encouraging the intercropping during the gestation periods.

- Providing technical support and training with the assistance of Government institutions.

### Implementation

- National and State level committees are established to oversee the activities of the mission.
- **National Level Committee** comprises of,
  - An Executive Committee (EC) to guide and monitor the overall progress of the mission. It is headed by the Union Minister of Agriculture and consulted by the heads of several DACs.
  - A Standing Committee (SC) to oversee the activities and approve the Annual Action Plan (AAP) of the States.
  - A Mission Monitoring Committee (MMC) to review the physical and financial progress of the three Mini Missions.
- **State Level Committee** is formed by the State Government to decide the priorities, examine the AAPs and evaluate the progress of each Mini Missions implemented in the States. It is chaired by the Chairman of Agriculture Production Commissioner/Principal Secretary/Secretary (Agriculture) of the State.

## Rural Self-Employment Training Institute (RSETI)

Source: Kurukshetra Magazine

### Background

RSETI concept is based on **RUDSETI** (Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute), a society established jointly by three agencies i.e. Syndicate Bank, Canara Bank and Sri Manjunatheswara Trust based at Ujire in Karnataka.

### About RSETI

- RSETIs are managed by Banks with active co-operation from the Government of India and State Government.
- Dedicated institutions designed to ensure necessary skill training and skill up-gradation of the rural BPL youth to mitigate the unemployment problem.
- These are promoted and managed by banks with active cooperation from state governments
- One RSETI is established in every district in the country. The concerned bank is the lead bank in the district takes responsibility for creating and managing it. Government of India will provide one - time grant assistance, up to a maximum of Rs. 1

crore for meeting the expenditure on construction of the building and other infrastructure.

- After successful completion of the training, they will be provided with credit linkage assistance by the banks to start their own entrepreneurial ventures.

#### **Programme Structure & Contents:**

Each RSETI should offer 30 to 40 skill development programmes in a financial year in various avenues. The programmes are of short duration ranging from 1 to 6 weeks and could fall into the categories listed below:

- **Agricultural Programmes:** Agriculture and allied activities like dairy, poultry, apiculture, horticulture, sericulture, mushroom cultivation, floriculture, fisheries, etc
- **Product Programme:** Dress designing for men and women, rexine articles, incense sticks manufacturing, football making, bag, bakery products, leaf cup making, recycled paper manufacturing, etc.
- **Process Programmes:** Two-wheeler repairs, radio/TV repairs, motor rewinding, electrical transformer repairs, irrigation pump-set repairs, tractor and power tiller repairs, cell phone repairs, beautician course, photography and videography, screen printing, domestic electrical appliances repair, computer hardware, and DTP.
- **General Programmes:** Skill development for women
- **Other Programmes:** Related to other sectors like leather, construction, hospitality and any other sector depending on local requirements.

Training programmes will be decided by the institute based on the local resource situation and potential demand for the products/services. A uniform standardized curriculum would be developed and circulated among the institutes. There shall be two sets of training curriculums in all the RSETIs:

1. Basic orientation programme courses for SGSY SHGs.
2. Skill development programmes for micro enterprise and wage employment/placement.

Soft skill training shall be an integral part of all the training programmes.

#### **Selection of trainees:**

At least 70% of the trainees should be from the rural BPL category certified by the DRDA. Proper

weightage, as per SGSY guidelines will be given to SC/STs, minorities, physically challenged and women.

#### **Recognition of RSETI trainees:**

Certificates issued by an RSETI will be recognized by all banks for purposes of extending credit to the trainees. It means that RSETI trained rural youths will be free to access any scheduled bank for loan/credit.

#### **Credit Linkage:**

Credit needs of trainees will be appraised by RSETIs and the sense will be conveyed to the bank branches. The trainees could avail bank loans under SGSY or any other government-sponsored programmes.

## **XVIII Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit**

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

The XVIII Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was held at Baku, Azerbaijan on 25-26 October. The Indian delegation headed by Vice President participated in the summit. At the NAM Baku Summit, the Republic of Azerbaijan will take over the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement for the upcoming 3 years.

#### **The theme of the Summit**

“Upholding the Bandung Principles to ensure concerted and adequate response to the challenges of the contemporary world”

The theme is significant as it relates to the forthcoming 65th anniversary of Bandung Principles in 2020 and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Movement in 2021.

#### **What are the Bandung Principles?**

The Principles of Bandung, a political statement encapsulating the need to promote world peace and cooperation were formulated at the Asian-African Conference in 1955. The core principles of the Bandung were;

- Political self-determination
- Mutual respect for sovereignty
- Non-aggression
- Non-interference in internal affairs, and
- Equality.

## Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program( SVEEP)



**Source:** Press Information Bureau & Election Commission of India

SVEEP is the flagship program of the Election Commission of India for voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India.

### History of SVEEP

- The seed of SVEEP was born in 2009, out of managerial underlining of the gaps in the registration of citizens as voters and the more glaring gap in turnout from election to election.
- SVEEP began with the introduction of planned IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) interventions in the Jharkhand elections of end-2009.

### Goal

SVEEP's primary goal is **to build a truly participative democracy in India** by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote and make an informed decision during the elections.

### Key highlights

- The programme is based on multiple general as well as targeted interventions that are designed according to the socio-economic, cultural and demographic profile of the state as well as the history of electoral participation in previous rounds of elections and learning thereof.
- The SVEEP Wing formulates policies, lays down the framework, plans interventions and monitors implementation besides carrying out continuous discourse with voting publics, civil society groups and media.
- It handles work related to all aspects of Voters' Awareness & Education aimed towards improving Electoral Participation in the country and building up a culture of participative democracy among citizens.

## Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

### Aim

The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced

### Components

The three components outlined under the scheme are thus aimed towards **enhancing agricultural productivity, reducing the cost of cultivation** which will enable boosting and securing farmer's income in the long run. The components are;

- Price Support Scheme (PSS)
- Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)
- The pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS)

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

### Price Support Scheme (PSS)

- In the Price Support Scheme (PSS), the physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds, and Copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies with proactive role of State governments.
- In addition to the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.(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 the Central Government as per norms.

### Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)

- Under 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 payments 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 the notified market.



- The support of the central government for PDPS will be given as per norms.

### **The pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS)**

- It has been decided that for oilseeds, states have the option to roll out the 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 the 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.

## **First National Protocol to Enumerate Snow Leopard Population in India**

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

In a boost towards protecting and conserving Snow Leopards, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched the First National Protocol on Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India, on the occasion of International Snow Leopard Day and the 4th meeting of **Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Program**

### **Who developed it?**

It has been developed by scientific experts in association with the Snow Leopard States/UTs namely, Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

### **Countries with Snow Leopard are;**

*India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Mongolia, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.*

### **4th steering committee meeting of the Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Program**

- It was organized by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change at New Delhi
- The 4th Steering Committee meeting of the GSLEP was attended by Ministers from Nepal, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia along with senior officials from nine of the Snow Leopard countries.
- The Steering Committee meeting of GSLEP chaired by Nepal and Co-Chaired by Kyrgyzstan shared their experiences to intensify collaborative efforts towards conserving the Snow Leopards and its ecosystem.

### **Population Assessment of the World's Snow Leopards (PAWS) and India's Role**

- India has ratified and played an important role in the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP), a high-level inter-governmental alliance of all the 12 snow leopard range countries.
- These Governments have jointly initiated an effort to conduct Population Assessment of the World's Snow Leopards, or PAWS.
- Recognizing the importance of understanding snow leopard occurrence and status for conservation planning, the Government of India has launched India's PAWS effort, referred to here as the 'Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAII)', which is expected to lead to scientifically robust national and state-wise population estimates of this endangered and elusive cat across its high altitude habitat, both inside and outside protected areas

## **State of Environment Report by CSE**

**Source:** PIB, Down To Earth & Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)

The State of India's Environment report is an **annual compilation done by Down To Earth, the fortnightly which Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) helps publish.** The 2019 report is an extensively researched document covering a wide range of subjects – water and sanitation, waste, health, air pollution, the commons, forests and wildlife, elections, climate change, urbanization, renewable energy, and agriculture.

### Key Highlights & environmental parameters of the Report

- **State of air:** The report mentions that Air pollution is responsible for 12.5 percent of all deaths in India. Its impact on children is equally worrying. It also mentions that over 100,000 children below the age of five die due to bad air in the country.
- **State of development:** The report states that Climate change poses the biggest economic threat in the world today and features prominently in the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030. With just 10 years to go, India is yet to identify indicators to track its climate change preparedness. Of the 13 SDGs the country is tracking, indicators exist for only a handful of the targets.
- **State of Water:** It reports that both surface and groundwater in the country are under stress. 86 water bodies are critically polluted. The bulk of the polluted water bodies are in Karnataka, Telangana, and Kerala. One of the reasons is the substantial increase (136 percent) in the number of grossly polluting industries between 2011 and 2018. Groundwater is also reeling under overexploitation, which is running 94.5 percent of all minor irrigation schemes in the country. There has been an unsustainable increase in the number of deep tube wells that have gone up by 80 percent between 2006-07 and 2013-14.
- **State of land and agriculture:** It mentions that the input costs for major crops are rising, the average farmland size is shrinking. Even the share of the insured cropped area stands at a dismal 26 percent.
- **State of Health:** According to the report India's rural health infrastructure is ailing. There is a **35 percent shortfall in the number of 24x7 public health centres**, where 26 percent of the positions for medical officers are lying vacant. In fact, **Kerala does not have a single 24x7 public health centre**. It also reports that the **number of new doctors qualifying every year in the country has decreased by 60 percent between 2013 and 2017**.
- **State of cities:** As per the report by 2050, India is projected to add 416 million urban dwellers to the world's urban population and will be home to about 58 percent of the total global population. India has 2,613 towns with slums. Of them, **57 percent are in Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra**.
- **State of waste:** The report mentions that 79 major protests against unsanitary landfills and dump yards have been recorded in 22 states in the past three years. **Maharashtra, which registered 16 major protests, leaves 43 percent of its waste unprocessed**. While India claims to process 96 percent of its biomedical waste, eight states and UTs have defaulting hospitals. **The country has also recorded a 56 percent increase in the number of hazardous-waste generating industries between 2009 and 2016-17**. At the same time, most of these industries are not properly maintaining their waste inventory, as mandated by the law.
- **State of energy:** As per the report India's natural gas and hydro-based power plants are in shambles. Gas-based plants are running at 24 percent of their capacity due to the **acute shortage of domestic natural gas**. Hydropower projects, on the other hand, are running at just 19 percent of their capacity and their share in total installed capacity has consistently declined since 1962. The country's progress in renewable energy in 2018-19 has also been dismal. In wind, the country met only 6.3 percent of the target this year. In solar, it met 5.86 percent.
- **State of the climate:** according to the report there has been a **22 percent increase in India's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions between 2010 and 2014**. This has been fuelled by the **energy sector, which is responsible for 73 percent of the total GHG emissions**. In 2018, 11 states recorded major extreme weather events that claimed 1,425 lives.
- **State of forests:** The report also mentions that India has recently shifted to a powerful forest fire monitoring and alert system, SNPP-VIIRS, which can capture forest fires with better accuracy and precision. In April 2019, the new technology recorded 69,523 forest fires, which was 9.5 times more than that recorded by the earlier technology.
- **State of wildlife:** As per this report 37 species were poached or seized in 2018. Of these, 13, including lion, marked an increase over the last year; 161 wild animals were also killed due to road and train accidents
- **State of employment:** It mentions that India has witnessed a 1.9 times increase in the

unemployment rate in the past two years. This has especially affected the youth and the educated. The unemployment rate among people with at least a graduate degree was 13.17 percent in September-December 2018, up from 10.39 percent in May-August 2017.

## Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

### About Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

- Rashtriya Ekta Diwas or National Unity Day is celebrated annually on October 31 to pay tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (Birth Anniversary)- Indian freedom fighter and independent India's first deputy prime minister and home minister.
- He was instrumental in making a united India from the 565 semi-autonomous princely states and British-era colonial provinces.
- Since 2014, 31st October it has observed as Rashtriya Ekta Diwas and people from all walks of life participate in the Run for Unity, across the country.
- Run for Unity is organized all over the country in a spirit of achieving the goal – Ek Bharat Shreshta Bharat.
- During the celebration police contingents from all over the country presented a parade

## Excavation in Gottiprolu(Andhra Pradesh) by ASI

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

Recently the 1st phase of excavation by a team of Archaeological Survey of India at **Gottiprolu near Naidupeta in Nellore (now renamed as Sri Potti Sri Ramulu) district, Andhra Pradesh** has discovered the remains of a huge settlement surrounded by a massive brick enclosure.

### About the Site and findings

- The site of Gottiprolu lies on the right bank of a distributary of river Swarnamukhi about seventeen kilometers east of Naidupet and eighty kilometers from Tirupati and Nellore.
- The excavation revealed the presence of brick-built structures in different sizes and forms.



- On the basis of the brick size and associated findings they can be placed anywhere between 2nd – 1st century BCE or little later (nearly 2000 years old).
- The most outstanding discovery is of a massive sized brick enclosure wall at the southern part of the mound. This structure is of baked bricks
- Another interesting find is the small rectangular brick tank exposed near the inner lining of the curved brick structure.



### About Stone Vishnu Idol

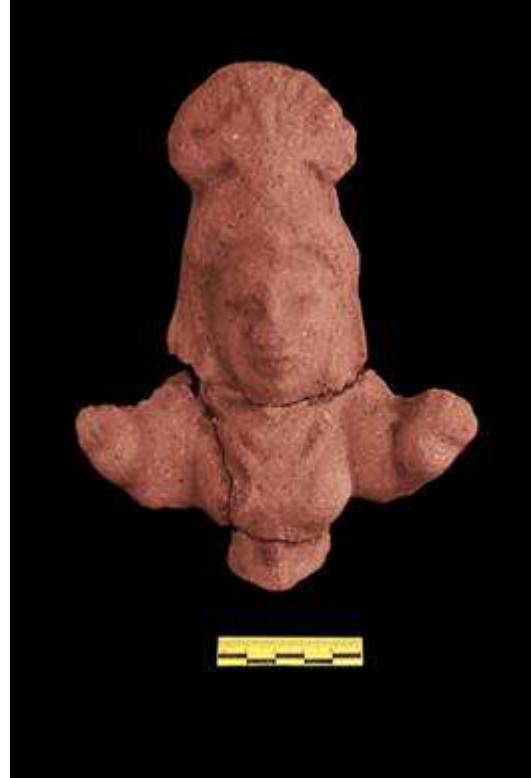
Apart from the excavated remains, one of the most major find was the discovery of a buried Vishnu sculpture from the western part of the village.



Subsequent excavations conducted around the image revealed it to be a life-size image of Vishnu measuring about 2 meters in height. It displays a four-armed Vishnu standing over a pedestal carrying chakra and conch in his upper right and left hands respectively. The lower right is in the bestowing boon and the left hand in katihasta (resting on the hip) posture. The iconographical feature like the elaborate headgear, thick holy thread, and decorative drapery dates it to the Pallava period (circa 8th cent. CE).

#### Terracotta Female Figurine

Other interesting antiquity retrieved is the molded female terracotta figurine **with two hands lifted upwards**.



#### Pottery & Conical Jars

Interesting pottery finds are the **base of conical jars placed at the eastern side of the structure**. Such conical jars are widely distributed in Tamil Nadu and considered to be imitated variety of Roman Amphorae jars.



### Drainage system

A series of **broken terracotta pipes fitted into one another** revealed about the **civic amenities maintained by the occupants of this site**. The drainage system pattern is understood by the exposed remains of the drainage at the site.



**Other major retrieved antiquities unearthed are copper and lead coins, iron spearhead**, stone celts, terracotta beads, ear stud in semi-precious stone and hopscotches. The ceramic assemblage of the site consisted of fine quality black and redware collected from the lower levels, conical jars, rouletted sherds, russet coated ware, etc.

### Significance of the site

- The findings of assorted stone tools of Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods from secondary contexts suggest that prehistoric people also occupied this area
- These settlements could have been an important trade centre as indicated by the presence of imitated amphorae wares that were mostly used to transport liquid commodities.
- The proximity of the site to the seacoast suggests that the site could have served as a strategic settlement involved in maritime trade.
- The two fortified townships within the gap of 15kms during early historic times indicates the significant strategic location was preferred by the early historic people for trade in the region keeping in view of proximity of the sea, River and Lake (Pulicat).

## National Health Profile 2019

**Source:** Press Information Bureau & Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI)

Recently the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare released the 14th National Health Profile (NHP) 2019 & its e-book (digital version) This 14th edition of NHP is the continuation of the publication since 2005.

### Who prepared it?

The NHP is prepared by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) (annually)

### What it covers?

NHP covers comprehensive information on demographic, socio-economic health status, health finance indicators, health infrastructure and health of human resources in the country.

### Key highlights of NHP

- The NHP highlights substantial health information under **major indicators** viz.
  1. Demographic indicators (population and vital statistics)
  2. Socio-economic indicators (education, employment, housing and amenities, drinking water and sanitation) and
  3. Health status indicators (incidence and prevalence of common communicable and non-communicable diseases and RCH) etc.
- The health finance section provides an overview of health insurance and expenditure on health, both public and Out of Pocket Expenditure (OOP), etc.
- The section on human resources provides an overview of availability of manpower working in the health sector, while the health infrastructure section provides details of Medical and Dental Colleges, AYUSH Institutes, Nursing Courses, and Paramedical Courses, etc.

### Key findings

- **Life Expectancy at Birth:** It has increased from 49.7 years in 1970-75 to 68.7 years in 2012-16. For the same period, the Life Expectancy for Females is 70.2 years and 67.4 years for Males
- **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR):** Infant Mortality Rate has declined considerably (33 i.e. Per 1000 Live Births in 2016), however, differentials of rural (37) & urban (23) are still high.
- **Demographics:** It reports a high incidence of the young and economically active population (27% of

the population below 14 years, 64.7% are in the age group of 15-59 and 8.5% above 60 years of age)

- Total Fertility Rate(TFR): The TFR for the country was 2.3 whereas in rural areas it has been 2.5 and it has been 1.8 in urban areas during 2016 as per the latest available information.

### Importance

- Health data is an important source of understanding the needs and issues of the population
- It helps in understanding the goals, our strengths, and weaknesses and is also an important means to strategize area-specific interventions.
- Good quality data enables policymakers to make evidence-based policies and aids effective implementation of various schemes

## Indo-French joint Exercise-SHAKTI 2019

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

### About the Mission

- It's a **biennial exercise** and is conducted alternately in India and France.
- The Exercise SHAKTI(Army) between India and France commenced in the year 2011
- This year the Exercise was held in Rajasthan
- A contingent of the Sikh Regiment of Sapta Shakti Command represented Indian Army in this exercise.
- The French Army delegation was represented by troops of 21st Marine Infantry Regiment of 6th Armoured Brigade
- The joint exercise focused on Counter-Terrorism operations in the backdrop of semi-desert terrain under the United Nations Mandate.
- The training focused primarily on a high degree of physical fitness, sharing of drill at tactical level and learning of best practices from each other.
- The exercise aims at enhancing understanding, cooperation, and interoperability between the two Armies
- The other exercises between Indian and France are;
  1. Garuda- Air Force
  2. Varuna- Naval

## National Mission for Strategic Knowledge on Climate Change

**Source:** PIB & Ministry of Science & Technology

National Mission for Strategic Knowledge on Climate Change is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change. The Mission Aims to create a comprehensive knowledge system that informs and supports climate change action in India with the help of research and communication-based actions.

### Objectives of the mission

- Formation of knowledge networks among the existing knowledge institutions engaged in research and development relating to climate science and facilitate data sharing and exchange through a suitable policy framework and institutional support
- Establishment of global technology watch groups with institutional capacities to carry out research on risk minimized technology selection for developmental choices
- Development of national capacity for modeling the regional impact of climate change on different ecological zones within the country for different seasons and living standards
- Establishing research networks and encouraging research in the areas of climate change impacts on important socio-economic sectors like agriculture, health, natural ecosystem, bio-diversity, coastal zones, etc.
- Generation and development of the conceptual and knowledge basis for defining the sustainability of development pathways in the light of responsible climate change-related actions
- Providing an improved understanding and awareness of the key climate processes and the resultant climate risks and associated consequences
- Complementing the efforts under the other national missions, strengthen indigenous capacity for the development of appropriate technologies for responding to climate change through adaptation and mitigation and promote their utilization by the Government and societies for sustainable growth of economies
- Creating institutional capacity for research infrastructure including access to relevant data sets, computing and communication facilities, and

awareness to improve the quality and sector-specific scenarios of climate change over the Indian subcontinent.

- Ensuring the flow and generation of human resources through a variety of measures including incentives to attract young scientists to climate science
- Building alliances and partnerships through global collaboration in research & technology development on climate change under International and bilateral S&T cooperation arrangements

## National Water Mission(NWM)

**Source:** PIB & India Environment Portal

NWM is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change. It aims to ensure sustainable water supply by conserving water, minimizing waste and ensuring equitable distribution of water resources throughout India.

### Goals of the Mission

NWM has 5 goals and 39 strategies prescribed in the Mission Document. The goals are;

1. Comprehensive water database in public domain and assessment of the impact of climate change on water resource
2. Promotion of citizen and state actions for water conservation, augmentation, and preservation
3. Focused attention to vulnerable areas including over-exploited areas
4. Increasing water use efficiency by 20%
5. Promotion of basin level integrated water resources management

The mission document also aims to formulate river-linking projects. Since water is a state subject, the mission identifies the need for states to prepare their state-specific plans of action. It envisages that the respective State Specific Action Plans (SSAP) would be required to conduct critical assessments of current water policies in the states, formulate water budgets, create comprehensive and integrated water plans for water security, safety and sustainability till 2050

## The National Mission on Sustainable Habitat(NMSH)

**Source:** Press Information Bureau & Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

NMSH was approved by the Prime Minister's Council for Climate Change in June 2010. There are eight National Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, with the National Mission on Sustainable Habitat being one of them.

### Objectives of the Mission

- Improvements in energy efficiency in buildings through the extension of the energy conservation building code – which addresses the design of new and large commercial buildings to optimize their energy demand
- Better urban planning and modal shift to public transport – make long term transport plans to facilitate the growth of medium and small cities in such a way that ensures efficient and convenient public transport
- Improved management of solid and liquid waste, e.g. recycling of material and urban waste management – with special focus on the development of technology for producing power from waste
- Improved ability of habitats to adapt to climate change by improving the resilience of infrastructure, community-based disaster management, and measures for improving advance warning systems for extreme weather events and
- Conservation through appropriate changes in the legal and regulatory framework.

### Mission Targets

- **Development of sustainable habitat standards** that lead to robust development strategies while simultaneously addressing climate change-related concerns
- **Preparation of city development plans** that comprehensively address adaptation and mitigation concerns
- **Preparation of comprehensive mobility plans** that enable cities to undertake long-term, energy-efficient and cost-effective transport planning and
- Capacity building for undertaking activities relevant to the Mission.

## National Mission on Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE)

**Source:** Press Information Bureau & Bureau of Energy Efficiency

It is one of the eight national missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). The Mission is implemented since 2011

### Objective

NMEEE aims to strengthen the market for energy efficiency through the implementation of innovative business models in the energy efficiency sector.

### Initiatives under the Mission

NMEEE consist of four initiatives to enhance energy efficiency in energy-intensive industries which are as follows:

- **Perform Achieve and Trade Scheme (PAT):** Implementing a market assisted compliance mechanism to accelerate the implementation of cost-effective improvements in energy efficiency in large energy-intensive industries
- **Market Transformation for Energy Efficiency (MTEE):** Accelerating the shift to energy-efficient appliances in a specific application through innovative measures to make the products more affordable.
- **Energy Efficiency Financing Platform (EEFP):** Facilitating Financial Institutions to invest in Energy Efficiency Projects and Programmes
- **Framework for Energy Efficient Economic Development (FEEED):** Developing fiscal instruments to leverage financing for Energy Efficiency through risk mitigation:
  - Partial Risk Guarantee Fund for Energy Efficiency (PRGFEE) and
  - Venture Capital Fund for Energy Efficiency (VCFEE) to promote energy efficiency
  - National Energy Conservation Award and Painting Competition

## National Solar Mission

**Source:** Press Information Bureau & International Energy Agency

**The Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM), or the National Solar Mission,** is an initiative of the Government of India and State Governments to promote solar power in India. Inaugurated in January 2010, the JNNSM has been

revised twice and now boasts a target of 100 GW of solar PV by 2022.

### Objective

To establish India as a global leader in solar energy by creating the policy conditions for its deployment across the country. Each Phase is supported by differing key policies and targets.

### Phases under the Mission

#### Phase I (2010 – 2013):

- Target for grid-connected PV (including rooftop) target: 1 000 MW
- The target for off-grid solar PV applications: 200 MW

#### Phase II (2014 – 2017):

- Cumulative target for grid-connected solar PV (including rooftop): 4 000 – 10 000 MW
- The target for off-grid solar PV applications: 1 000 MW
- Scheme for at least 25 solar parks (34 approved currently under Government) and the Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects to target 40 GW solar PV

#### Phase III (2017 – 2022)

- The cumulative target for grid-connected solar PV (including rooftop): 100 000 MW
- The target for off-grid solar PV applications (as share of cumulative): 2 000 MW.

## UNESCO has designated Mumbai & Hyderabad UNESCO Creative Cities Network

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

UNESCO has designated Mumbai as a member of UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the field of FILM and Hyderabad in the field of GASTRONOMY.

### About UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development
- The UNESCO Creative Cities Network now counts a total of 246 cities.
- The member cities that form part of the Network come from all continents and regions with different income levels and populations.
- The Creative Cities Network is a privileged partner of UNESCO, not only as a platform for reflection on the role of creativity as a lever for sustainable



development but also as a breeding ground of action and innovation, notably for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- They work together towards a **common mission: placing creativity and the creative economy at the core of their urban development plans** to make cities safe, resilient, inclusive and sustainable, in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**The 7 categories for recognition under UCCN are;**

1. Crafts and Folk Arts
2. Design
3. Film
4. Gastronomy
5. Music
6. Media Arts
7. Literature

**Previously, 3 Indian cities were recognized as members of UCCN, namely-**

- Jaipur-Crafts and Folk Arts(2015)
- Varanasi-Creative city of Music (2015)
- Chennai-Creative city of Music(2017)

## German Federal Chancellor visit to India

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

At the invitation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, German Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel visited India from 31 October – 1 November 2019 for the fifth round of Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC).

**Important MoUs/agreements signed during the visit of Chancellor of Germany to India**

- Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) of Regarding Cooperation on Strategic Projects
- Joint Declaration of Intent on Indo-German Partnership for Green Urban Mobility
- Joint Declaration of Intent for Joint Cooperation in Research & Development on Artificial Intelligence
- Joint Declaration of Intent regarding the cooperation in the field of prevention of marine litter
- Implementing Arrangement for Exchange of Personnel between ISRO and German Aerospace Centre
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of Occupational Diseases, Re-habilitation and

vocational training of Insured Persons & workers with disabilities

- Memorandum of Understanding For Cooperation in Inland, Coastal and Maritime Technology
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote, establish and expand scientific and technological research cooperation
- MoU on Establishment of an Academic Collaboration in Ayurveda, Yoga, and Meditation

## National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

The National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem NMSHE is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). NMSHE is a multi-pronged, cross-cutting mission across various sectors. NMSHE intends to evolve suitable management and policy measures for sustaining and safeguarding the Himalayan ecosystem along with developing capacities at the national level to continuously assess its health status.

**Goals**

- The main goal of NMSHE is to assess scientifically the vulnerability of the Himalayan region to climate change in physical, biological and sociocultural context.
- NMSHE also aims to build and support capacities at the central and state levels to assess climate change and formulate adequate response measures to the challenges in the Himalayan region.

**The mission attempts to address some important issues concerning**

- Himalayan Glaciers and the associated hydrological consequences
- Biodiversity conservation and protection
- Wildlife conservation and protection
- Traditional knowledge societies and their livelihood and
- Planning for sustaining of the Himalayan Ecosystem.

**Achievements and ongoing activities under NMSHE**

- Task Forces for Thematic Research
- Institutional and Human Capacity Building

- Governance for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (G-SHE)
- Inter-University Consortium on Cryosphere and Climate Change
- Research on Glacial Lake Outburst Floods
- States in IHR(Indian Himalayan Region) and Strengthening State Climate Change Cells
- International and Regional Collaboration
- Himalayan Sustainable Development Forum (HSDF)

## National Mission for a Green India

**Source:** PIB & Ministry of Environment and Forest  
The National Mission for a Green India is one of the eight Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). The Mission recognizes that climate change phenomena will seriously affect and alter the distribution, type, and quality of natural resources of the country and the associated livelihoods of the people.

### Mission Aim

Respond to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures, which would help:

- Enhancing carbon sinks in sustainably managed forests and other ecosystems
- Adaptation of vulnerable species/ecosystems to the changing climate and
- Adaptation of forest-dependent local communities in the face of climatic variability.

### Mission Objectives

- Increased forest/tree cover on 5 m ha of forest/non-forest lands and improved quality of forest cover on another 5 m ha (a total of 10 m ha)
- Improved ecosystem services including biodiversity, hydrological services, and carbon sequestration as a result of treatment of 10 m ha.
- Increased forest-based livelihood income for 3 million forest-dependent households
- Enhanced annual CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration of 50-60 million tonnes by the year 2020

### Key innovations:

- **Focus on quality of forests:** Primary focus on improving the density of forest cover
- **Focus on ecosystem services:** Emphasis on biodiversity, water, and improved biomass – Carbon sequestration as co-benefit – Addressing

ecosystems like grasslands, wetlands, urban and peri-urban

- **Focus on democratic decentralization: Gram Sabha as an overarching institution to facilitate the implementation of the Mission** activities at the village level, nested as Polycentric Approach, not one size fits all.
- **Creating a new cadre of Community Youth as Foresters:** Build a skilled cadre of young “community foresters” from scheduled tribes and other forest-dwelling communities
- **Adoption of Landscape-based Approach:** Interventions at scale (5000-6000 hectares) at a time – Simultaneous treatment of forest and non-forest areas – Addressing key drivers of degradation
- Reform Agenda as conditionality

## National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture

**Source:** PIB & Guidelines of National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture

National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) has been formulated for enhancing agricultural productivity especially in rainfed areas focusing on integrated farming, water use efficiency, soil health management, and synergizing resource conservation. NMSA derives its mandate from Sustainable Agriculture Mission which is one of the eight Missions outlined under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

### Objectives

1. **To make agriculture more productive, sustainable, remunerative** and climate-resilient by promoting location specific Integrated/Composite Farming Systems
2. To conserve natural resources through **appropriate soil and moisture conservation measures**
3. To adopt **comprehensive soil health management practices** based on soil fertility maps, soil test based application of macro & micronutrients, judicious use of fertilizers, etc.
4. To **optimize the utilization of water resources** through efficient water management to expand coverage for achieving ‘more crop per drop’
5. To **develop the capacity of farmers & stakeholders**, in conjunction with other ongoing Missions e.g. National Mission on Agriculture

Extension & Technology, National Food Security Mission, National Initiative for Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA), etc., in the domain of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures

6. **To pilot models in select blocks for improving the productivity of rainfed farming** by mainstreaming rainfed technologies refined through NICRA and by leveraging resources from other schemes/Missions like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), RKVY, etc. and
7. To establish an **effective inter and intra Departmental/Ministerial coordination** for accomplishing key deliverables of the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture under the aegis of National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

### Mission Components

#### Rainfed Area Development (RAD)

RAD adopts an **area-based approach for the development and conservation of natural resources along with farming systems**. This component has been formulated in a 'watershed plus framework', i.e., to explore potential utilization of natural resources base/assets available/created through watershed development and soil conservation activities /interventions under MGNREGS, NWDPPA, RVP&FPR, RKVY, IWMP, etc. This component introduces appropriate farming systems by integrating multiple components of agriculture such as crops, horticulture, livestock, fishery, forestry with agro-based income-generating activities and value addition.

#### On-Farm Water Management (OFWM)

OFWM focuses primarily on enhancing water use efficiency by promoting efficient on-farm water management technologies and equipment. This not only focuses on application efficiency but, in conjunction with the RAD component, also will emphasize on effective harvesting & management of rainwater.

#### Soil Health Management

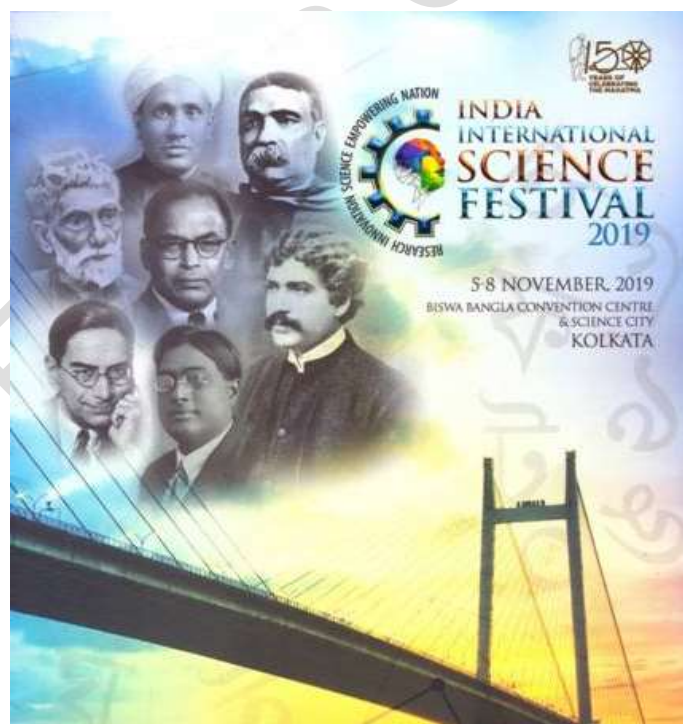
It aims at promoting the location as well as crop-specific sustainable soil health management including residue management, organic farming practices by way of creating and linking soil fertility maps with macro - micronutrient management, appropriate land use based on land capability, judicious application of

fertilizers and minimizing the soil erosion/degradation

Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture: Monitoring, Modeling, and Networking (CCSAMN)

CCSAMN provides creation and bidirectional (land/farmers to research/scientific establishments and vice versa) dissemination of climate change-related information and knowledge by way of piloting climate change adaptation/mitigation research/model projects in the domain of climate-smart sustainable management practices and integrated farming system suitable to local agro-climatic conditions.

## Fifth India International Science Festival



Source: Press Information Bureau

#### About IIFS

- India International Science Festival (IISF) 2019, an annual event organized jointly by the science and technology-related Ministries and Departments of the Government of India and Vijnana Bharati (Vibha), is being held in Kolkata this year.
- This is the fifth edition since its inception in 2015 and will take place during November 5th - 8th, 2019.
- IISF-2019 is a festival to celebrate the achievements of India's scientific and technological advancements with students, innovators, craftsmen, farmers, scientists and technocrats from India and abroad.

- The theme for this year's festival is RISEN India – Research, Innovation, and Science Empowering the Nation.
- Vigyan Prasar, an autonomous organization of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, is the nodal agency to coordinate the IISF 2019.
- For school students, a Students Science Village has been planned at IISF-2019 where more than 2,500 school students from all over the nation have been invited. Under the Pradhan Mantri Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, every Member of Parliament has been asked to nominate five students each along with their teacher from their constituency for the village. In six different houses named after our scientists, these students will be engaged in several science-fun activities and interact with scientists and technocrats.
- Young Scientists' Conference is another big event in terms of variety and number of participants where 1,500 young scientists and researchers will interact with various subject matter experts of international repute and also get a chance to present their posters and papers.
- Vigyanika Science Literature Festival will be another highlight of this year's IISF where several programmes related to the various genre have been organized.

## Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search & Rescue (SCOJtEx)-2019

**Source:** ANI news & Business Standard

### Key highlights

- India is the host for the Shanghai Co-operation Organization Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search & Rescue (SCOJtEx)-2019
- The exercise was organized by NDRF in the National capital to rehearse disaster response mechanisms and share knowledge, experience, and technology.
- The main focus of the joint exercise will be to test the region's preparedness to activate intergovernmental interaction for an immediate response.
- The exercise is the outcome of the 9th meeting of the heads of government departments of SCO countries dealing with the prevention and elimination of emergency situation in Kyrgyzstan

in 2017, in which India offered to organize the next annual disaster management exercise for the region.

### Significance

- The four days of joint cooperation in the field will help the member countries in dealing with rescue and search operation in a disaster situation
- Further, the forum will provide a platform to come up with planning and protocol to deal with the disaster
- The exercise provided an opportunity to enhance the coordination and co-operation involving operations in an earthquake scenario among the member countries

## 14th East Asia Summit and 16th ASEAN India summit

**Source:** The Economic Times & ASEAN website

The 14th East Asia Summit (EAS) was held in Bangkok, Thailand on 4 November 2019. The Meeting was chaired by Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand.

The agenda for this edition of the summit was to review the future direction of East Asia Summit co-operation and exchange views on regional and international issues.

### About East Asia Summit

- The East Asia Summit is the premier forum in the Asia-Pacific region to deal with issues relating to security and defence. Since its inception in 2005, it has played a significant role in the strategic, geopolitical and economic evolution of East Asia.
- Apart from the 10 ASEAN member states, East Asia Summit includes India, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, United States and Russia.

### Important Outcomes of the East Asia Summit

- During the summit, the members vowed to scale up efforts to deal with terrorism, radicalization and transnational crimes including by ramping up coordination with anti-terror watchdog FATF and relevant UN agencies.
- The powerful bloc also came out with a declaration listing measures to be taken by member countries to deal with various security challenges facing the region as well as on ways to counter-narratives of the terror groups.

- The EAS declaration called for effective measures to counter terrorism including by containing terror financing in the region, seen as an affirmation of India's call for a concerted approach to deal with terror groups.
- The declaration said the EAS will deepen cooperation with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the FATF-style regional bodies.
- The EAS also resolved to ensure effective implementation of FATF standards to deal with terror financing
- The bloc also recognized the importance of preventing criminal misuse of information and communications technologies (ICTs) such as the internet for terrorism or to incite terrorist acts while resolving to intensify cooperation to combat and prevent transnational crimes.
- The EAS also asked member countries to enhance collaboration in containing transnational crime consistent with domestic laws and regulations within and between member countries.

### 16th ASEAN India summit

**The Prime Minister of Thailand chaired the 16th ASEAN-India Summit, during the 35th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits.**

### Outcomes of the summit

- The meeting discussed the promotion of ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership and means to increase maritime cooperation, trade and investment, connectivity, as well as cooperation in science, technology, and innovation.
- On the socio-cultural front, the meeting explored further cooperation on people-to-people connectivity, cultural exchanges, and tourism.
- On economic cooperation, the Leaders aimed to increase trade value between India and ASEAN to 200 billion USD by 2022, and to open greater market access among each other under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
- The Meeting supported increased networking among the private sector of both sides, capacity building for MSMEs and startups, as well as cooperation on tourism and blue economy

## The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

**Source:** PIB & India Today

Recently India has pulled out of RCEP pact. It was meant to be the biggest free trade agreement with 40 percent of global commerce and 35 percent GDP involving 16 countries, home to 3.6 billion people or half the population of the world.

### Why India opted out of the RCEP agreement?

1. **Economic slowdown:** India's economy is passing through a difficult time. The rate of GDP growth has been slowing down for five consecutive quarters, that is, since January-March 2018. As the industry is reeling under pressure and the government is grappling to deal with the domestic economic situation, a massive free trade pact like RCEP would have exposed the Indian businesses and agriculture to unequal competition from countries that are lurking like giant sharks in the export arena.
2. **Trade Deficit:** India has massive trade deficits with almost all economic powerhouses of the world. Of the 15 RCEP countries, India has serious trade deficits with at least 11. At present, India ships 20 percent of all its exports to the RCEP countries and receives 35 percent of all imports from them.
3. **Farmers.** In agriculture, domestic players dealing in dairy products, spices — chiefly pepper and cardamom, rubber, and coconut would face dumping from the South Asian spice majors. Sri Lanka is already giving a tough time to Indian spice growers. Vietnam and Indonesia have very cheap rubber to export. Australia and New Zealand are waiting for free access to India for their dairy products. Indian businesses would be hit hard as RCEP does not offer enough protection to them.
4. **Industries:** Manufacturing output grew at its slowest pace in two years in October. The services sector is also not doing well, of late. It has seen, in the NPMI=ECI survey, the first back-to-back monthly slowdown since July-September 2017 in October. China and ASEAN countries have a robust service sector, and free entry to these players may damage the lone saviour of the Indian economy in these times of crisis.
5. **Past experience:** The Niti Aayog, in 2017, had published a report that pointed out that free trade

agreements have not worked well for India. It analyzed multiple free trade agreements that India signed in the past decade. Among those were FTA with Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea. The Niti Aayog found that FTA utilization by India has been abysmally low between 5 and 25 percent.

6. **China's Dumping of goods:** Finally, RCEP has come up as a Chinese gameplan to save its manufacturing industries from crumbling under their own weight. Several industrial players in India red-flagged the Chinese agenda of flooding the Indian market using the RCEP countries as a connecting network.

#### About RCEP

- RCEP is a proposed regional economic integration agreement among the 10 ASEAN countries and its six free-trade agreement partners—Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, South Korea and India (recently pulled out of it).
- These six members have FTAs with the ASEAN currently. If it materializes, the combined geopolitical resources would make it the most important economic grouping of the world.
- The idea of RCEP negotiations was discussed during the East Asian Summit in Phnom Penh (Cambodia) in November 2012.

### The Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS)

**Source:** PIB & Asia Regional Integration Center  
India recently joined as a development partner of the ACMECS

#### Objectives of ACMECS

- To increase competitiveness and generate greater growth along the borders.
- To facilitate the relocation of agricultural and manufacturing industries to areas with comparative advantage.
- To create employment opportunities and reduce income disparity among the four countries.
- To enhance peace, stability and shared prosperity for all in a sustainable manner.

#### About ACMECS

- ACMECS is a cooperation framework among Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam to utilize member countries' diverse strengths and to promote balanced development in the subregion.
- Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand initiated the establishment of this cooperation framework in April 2003.
- The areas of cooperation include, among others, transport, and trade and investment facilitation.

### India's first-ever global Mega-Science exhibition-Vigyan Samagam

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

Bringing the world's major Mega Science projects together, India's first-ever global Mega-Science exhibition, 'Vigyan Samagam', was inaugurated at the Science City in Kolkata

#### About the exhibition

- **Agencies involved in the project:** The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Department of Science and Technology (DST), the funding agencies of these projects and the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), Ministry of Culture, who are venue partners and having expertise in design and hosting such exhibitions, have joined hands to organize this prestigious Science Exhibition
- This multi-venue Science Exhibition, after its successful journey in Mumbai and Bengaluru, is now open for the public in Kolkata. Commencing from November 4, Vigyan Samagam will be in Kolkata till December 31, 2019.
- Vigyan Samagam exhibition will traverse its visitors through the world from micro to macro, unveiling the efforts of the international community in understanding the Universe.
- From the discovery of the Higgs particle to that of gravitational waves from the merger of neutron stars and black holes, these projects throw light on crucial questions related to the origin of the Universe and its evolution through its various stages.
- After Kolkata, Vigyan Samagam will commence its final leg in New Delhi. It will be put up at the

National Science Centre. Thereafter it will remain as a permanent exhibition at New Delhi and will be taken care-off by NCSM.

### Significance

The Exhibition will highlight India's contribution to the world's science, technology and innovation, and researches in the areas of high energy physics, nuclear physics, astronomy and astrophysics, nuclear energy, etc.

## ICEDASH and ATITHI

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

Recently the Union Minister for improved monitoring and pace of Customs clearance of imported goods and facilitating arriving international passengers by the electronic filing of Customs baggage and currency declarations.

India International Science Festival (IISF) 2019, an annual event organized jointly by the science and technology-related Ministries and Departments of the Government of India and Vijnana Bharati (Vibha), is being held in Kolkata this year. This is the fifth edition since its inception in 2015 and will take place during November 5th – 8th, 2019. IISF-2019 is a festival to celebrate the achievements of India's scientific and technological advancements with students, innovators, craftsmen, farmers, scientists and technocrats from India and abroad. Thus, the theme for this year's festival is **RISEN India** – Research, Innovation, and Science Empowering the Nation.

### About ICEDASH & ATITHI

#### ICEDASH

- It is an **Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) monitoring dashboard of the Indian Customs** helping the public see the daily Customs clearance times of import cargo at various ports and airports.
- With ICEDASH, Indian Customs has taken a lead globally to provide an effective tool that helps businesses compare clearance times across ports and plan their logistics accordingly. This dashboard has been developed by the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** in collaboration with NIC.
- ICEDASH can be accessed through the CBIC website.

#### ATITHI

- With ATITHI, CBIC has introduced an easy to use mobile app for international travelers to file the Customs declaration in advance.
- Passengers can use this app to file declaration of dutiable items and currency with the Indian Customs even before boarding the flight to India.
- ATITHI is available on both iOS and Android.

#### Significance

- Both ICEDASH and ATITHI would be key drivers for further improvement especially as they reduce interface and increase the transparency of Customs functioning.
- ATITHI would, in particular, create a tech-savvy image of India Customs and would encourage tourism and business travel to India

## Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade

**Source:** Indian Waterways Authority of India



In line with Government's focus on improving connectivity to the North Eastern Region (NER), a landmark container cargo consignment will sail on inland waterways from Haldia Dock Complex (HDC) to the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) terminal at Pandu in Guwahati. The 12-15 days voyage will be an integrated IWT movement via National Waterway-1 (River Ganga), NW-97 (Sunderbans), Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route and NW-2 (river Brahmaputra). **This is the first-ever containerized cargo movement on this Inland Water Transport (IWT) route.**

#### About Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade

There is a Protocol (agreement) between India & Bangladesh, under which vessels of either country can travel through specified river routes in the other

country. Inland Water Transit and Trade between India and Bangladesh. There are four specific river routes and 5 ports of call in each country designated under the Protocol. The present Protocol is valid up to March 2020 with a clause for automatic renewal thereafter. These are as follows: –

- Kolkata – Haldia – Raimongal – Chalna – Khulna – Mongla – Kaukhali-Barisal – Hizla – Chandpur – Narayanganj – Aricha – Sirajganj – Bahadurabad – Chilmari – Dhubri – Pandu- Silghat; and vice versa (Total one-way length: 1720 Km)
- Kolkata – Haldia – Raimongal – Mongla – Kaukhali – Barisal – Hizla – Chandpur – Narayanganj – Bhairab Bazar – Ajmiriganj – Markuli – Sherpur – Fenchuganj – Zakiganj – Karimganj; and vice versa (Total one-way length: 1318 Km)
- Rajshahi – Godagari – Dhulian; and vice versa (Total one-way length: 78 Km)
- Karimganj – Zakiganj – Fenchuganj – Sherpur – Markuli – Ajmiriganj – Bhairab Bazar – Narayanganj – Chandpur – Aricha – Siraganj – Bahadurabad – Chilmari – Dhubri – Pandu-Silghat; vice versa (Total one-way length: 1416 Km)

The five ports of call in each country are as follows:

S. No.	India	Bangladesh
1	Kolkata	Narayanganj
2	Haldia	Khulna
3	Karimganj	Mongla
4	Pandu	Mongla
5	Silghat	Ashuganj

Transportation of cargo through the IBP route has been taking place regularly for many-many years. However, transportation of Indian transit cargo on these protocol routes reduced in the last 40-15 years primarily due to less depth available in Sirajganj – Daikhowa & Ashuganj – Zakiganj stretch of Indo Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) during non-monsoon months. Considering this, the Government of India and the Government of Bangladesh have recently agreed to undertake dredging work in these stretches (with 80% funding for Govt. of India). This initiative is expected to substantially enhance cargo movement by IWT mode between Haldia & Kolkata ports and Guwahati/Silchar and other locations along Brahmaputra and Barak rivers in Assam.

## Samudrayaan project

Source: PIB & NIOT

India's ambition to send men to the deep sea in a submersible vehicle is likely to be a reality in 2021-22 with the 'Samudrayaan' project

### About the project

- It is an initiative of the National Institute of Ocean Technology
- Similar to ISRO's plan to carry persons on a space mission (Gaganyaan Mission), NIOT has undertaken Samudrayaan.
- The project proposes to **send a submersible vehicle with three persons to a depth of about 6000 metres** to carry out deep underwater studies
- The 'Samudrayaan' is a **part of the Ministry of Earth Sciences' pilot project for deep ocean mining for rare minerals.**

### Significance

- The success of the 'Samudrayaan' will help India to join the league of developed nations in the exploration of minerals from oceans
- The success of the 'Samudrayaan' will help India to join the league of developed nations in the exploration of minerals from oceans

### National Institute of Ocean Technology

- The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) was established in November 1993 as an **autonomous society under the Ministry of Earth Sciences**, Government of India.
- NIOT is managed by a Governing Council and the Director is the head of the Institute.
- The major aim of starting NIOT under the Ministry of Earth Sciences is to develop reliable indigenous technologies to solve various engineering problems associated with harvesting of non-living and living resources in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which is about two-thirds of the land area of India.

## India-Uzbekistan Joint Exercise 'Dustlik-2019'

Source: *Press Information Bureau*

### Key Highlights

- **The first-ever India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise** – Dustlik-2019 was held at Chirchik Training Area near Tashkent



- The exercise is focused on Counter-terrorism
- During the exercise, an Indian Army contingent will train along with Uzbekistan Army
- Before the exercise, the Indian Defence Minister visited Uzbekistan where he signed an MoU on cooperation in the field of Military Medicine between the Armed Forces of the two countries.
- Two Institution-to-Institution MoUs on training and capacity building between institutes of higher military learning of the two countries were also signed. The MoU is a byproduct of interactions emanating from the MoU on Military Education signed between the two countries in October 2018.

### Significance

The exercise will enable the sharing of best practices and experiences between the Armed Forces of the two countries and would lead to greater operational effectiveness.

## Bilateral Maritime Exercise- Samudra Shakti

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

### Key highlights

- It is a Bilateral Maritime Exercise between the Indian Navy and Indonesian Navy
- INS Kamorta, an Anti-Submarine Warfare Corvette jointly took part in the exercise with Indonesian Warship KRI Usman Harun, a multi-role Corvette in the Bay of Bengal as part of the Indian Navy – Indonesian Navy Bilateral Exercise ‘Samudra Shakti’
- The joint exercises include manoeuvres, Surface Warfare exercises, Air Defence exercises, Weapon firing drills, Helicopter Operations, and Boarding Operations.
- The Harbour Phase which was conducted on 04 and 05 November included professional interactions in the form of Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEE), cross deck visits, simulator drills, planning conferences, sports fixtures, and social interactions.

## Wastelands Atlas – 2019

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

Realizing the importance of the availability of reliable database on the wastelands of the country, the Union

Minister for Rural Development released the Wastelands Atlas – 2019 with robust geospatial information; Atlas to effectively assist in rolling back wastelands for productive use through various land development schemes & programs

### Previous Atlas

The Department of Land Resources in collaboration with the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), Department of Space has published Wastelands Atlases of India – 2000, 2005, 2010 & 2011 editions.

### Need for the Atlas

India with 2.4% of the total land area of the World is supporting 18% of the World’s population. The per capita availability of agriculture land in India is 0.12 ha whereas World per capita agriculture land is 0.29 ha. Unprecedented pressure on the land beyond its carrying capacity is resulting in the degradation of lands in the Country. Therefore, robust geospatial information on wastelands assumes significance and effectively helpful in rolling back the wastelands for productive use through various land development programmes/schemes.

### About Wastelands Atlas – 2019

- The new wastelands mapping exercise, carried out by NRSC using the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite data is brought out as the fifth edition of Wastelands Atlas – 2019.
- This Wastelands Atlas-2019 provides district and state-wise distribution of different categories of wastelands area including mapping of about 12.08 Mha hitherto unmapped area of Jammu & Kashmir.
- The changes in wastelands between 2008-09 and 2015-16 have been presented in the Atlas.

## Skills Build platform

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

Directorate General of Training (DGT), under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), announced the launch of the SkillsBuild platform **in collaboration with IBM.**

### Key features of the programme

- As part of the programme, a **two-year advanced diploma in IT, networking and cloud computing, co-created and designed by IBM, will be offered** at the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) & National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs).

- The platform will be extended to train ITI & NSTI faculty on building skills in Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- **SkillsBuild offers digital learning content from IBM and partners such as CodeDoor, Coorpacademy, and Skillsoft.**
- The digital platform will provide a personal **assessment of the cognitive capabilities and personality via MyInnerGenius to the students.**
- They will then learn foundational knowledge about digital technologies, as well as professional skills such as resume-writing, problem solving and communication.
- Students will also receive recommendations on role-based education for specific jobs that include technical and professional learning
- **This initiative is part of IBM's global commitment to create a job-ready workforce** and to build the next generation of skills needed for new collar careers.
- The platform is deployed with the support of leading NGOs like the Unnati and Edunet Foundation.
- IBM Volunteers along with the NGOs will offer students personalized coaching and experiential learning opportunities.

## Promotion of agricultural mechanization for in-situ management of crop residue in the state of Punjab, Haryana, UP & NCT of Delhi

Source: PIB & Scheme guidelines

### Background

Earlier, as per directions from Prime Minister's Office in 2017 with regard to the pollution caused in Delhi NCR due to stubble burning in States surrounding, a **high-level committee under Secretary (DARE)** has been set up. **The committee has recommended for adopting mechanized crop residue management.** As per the recommendations Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has formulated a Scheme which was included in the 2018-19 Budget.

### Objectives of the Scheme

- Protecting the environment from air pollution and preventing loss of nutrients and soil micro-organisms caused by burning of crop residue

- **Promoting in-situ management of crop residue by retention and incorporation into the soil through the use of appropriate mechanization inputs**
- **Promoting Farm Machinery Banks for custom hiring of in-situ crop residue management machinery** to offset the adverse economies of scale arising due to small landholding and high cost of individual ownership.
- Creating awareness among stakeholders through demonstration, capacity building activities and differentiated Information, Education and Communication strategies for effective utilization and management of crop residue.

### Components of the scheme

- Establish Farm Machinery Banks or Custom Hiring Centres of in-situ crop residue management machinery
- Procurement of Agriculture Machinery and Equipment for in-situ crop residue management
- Information, Education, and Communication for awareness on in-situ crop residue management

### Key features the scheme

- The **Central Sector Scheme**, 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue in the State of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh & NCT of Delhi' was launched by the Government of India to tackle air pollution and to subsidize machinery required for in-situ management of crop residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi.
- Within one year of its implementation utilizing an amount of Rs. 500 crore, the happy seeder/zero tillage technology was adopted in 8 lakh hectares of land in the North-Western States of India.
- Under the scheme, **financial assistance @50% of the cost is provided** to the farmers for the purchase of in-situ crop residue management machines on individual ownership basis.
- The **financial assistance for the establishment of Custom Hiring Centres of in-situ crop residue management** machinery is @ 80% of the project cost.

## Mission Innovation (MI) Face to Face meeting of Innovation Challenges(IC)

**Source:** Press Information Bureau

The Union Minister of Science & Technology inaugurated the Mission Innovation (MI) Face to Face meeting of Innovation Challenges(IC). During the event, the Minister has mentioned that India is going to increase the share of non-fossil fuel, and by 2022 plan to increase our renewable energy capacity to much beyond 175 GW and later till 450 GW.

### Objectives of the meeting

- To take stock of the deliverables by MI and its plans until 2020.
- Another major objective is to identify major gap areas in Clean Energy Innovation and how to address these beyond 2020 to make MI more impactful.

### About Mission Innovation

- **Mission Innovation was announced in November 2015** due to **pioneering efforts by India, France, and the USA**, as world leaders came together in Paris to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate changes.
- **Mission Innovation (MI) is a global initiative of 24 countries and the European Union** to dramatically accelerate global clean energy innovation.
- **As part of the initiative, participating countries have committed to double their governments' clean energy research and development (R&D) investments over five years**, while encouraging greater levels of private sector investment in transformative clean energy technologies.
- These additional resources are expected to dramatically accelerate the availability of the advanced technologies that will define a future global energy mix that is clean, affordable, and reliable.
- **Mission Innovation has identified eight (8) Innovation Challenges** which are global calls to action aimed at accelerating research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) in technology areas where increased international attention would make a significant impact in the shared fight against climate change.
- The Innovation Challenges cover the entire spectrum of RD&D; from early-stage research

needs assessments to technology demonstration projects.

- India is also co-leading Smart Grids, Off Grids and Sustainable Biofuels Innovation and is actively participating in all ICs and other activities of MI.

**These challenges taken up under Analysis and Joint Research and co-led by India and Canada include:**

1. Smart Grids
2. Off-Grid Access to Electricity
3. Carbon Capture
4. Sustainable Biofuels
5. Converting Sunlight
6. Clean Energy Materials and
7. Affordable Heating and Cooling of Buildings Innovation Challenge