

ISSUE - 06

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 3rd and 4th 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

GOVERNMENT E-MARKETPLACE(GEM)

Source: GeM portal

GeM is a one-stop portal to facilitate online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government Departments / Organizations / PSUs.

Aim

GeM aims to enhance transparency, efficiency, and speed in public procurement. It provides the tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation to facilitate the government users to achieve the best value for their money.

Key highlights about GeM

- GeM is a completely paperless, cashless and system driven e-marketplace that enables the procurement of common use goods and services with minimal human interface.

- Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D) with technical support of the National eGovernance Division (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) has developed GeM portal for procurement of both Products & Services.
- The portal was launched in 2016 by the Commerce & Industry Minister.

GeM facilities

- Listing of products for individual, prescribed categories of Goods/ Services of common use
- Look, estimate, compare and buying facility on dynamic pricing basis.
- Market place buying of the majority of common User Items.
- Buying Goods and Services online, as and when required.
- Single window system for aggregating demands and ordering

- Transparency and ease of buying
- Useful for low value buying and also for bulk buying at competitive price using Reverse Auction/ e-bidding.
- Continuous vendor rating system.
- User-friendly dashboard for buying and monitoring supplies and payments
- Return policy

HARMONIZED SYSTEM(HS) CODE

Source: PIB & World Customs Organization

In a long-awaited move to make the export of Khadi, exclusively categorized from the general league of textile products, the Ministry of commerce and industries has allocated separate HS code for this signature fabric of India

Significance

The decision of the government will open a new chapter in the field of Khadi export.

About HS Code

HS Stands for Harmonized System and it is a six-digit identification code.

- It was developed by the WCO (World Customs Organization) and customs officers use HS Code to clear every commodity that enters or crosses any international border
- The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System generally referred to as "Harmonized System" or simply "HS" is a multipurpose international product nomenclature developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO).
- It comprises about 5,000 commodity groups; each identified by a six-digit code, arranged in a legal and logical structure and is supported by well-defined rules to achieve uniform classification.
- The system is used by more than 200 countries and economies as a basis for their Customs tariffs and for the collection of international trade statistics. Over 98 % of the merchandise in international trade is classified in terms of the HS.

- The HS contributes to the harmonization of Customs and trade procedures, and the non-documentary trade data interchange in connection with such procedures, thus reducing the costs related to international trade.
- It is also extensively used by governments, international organizations and the private sector for many other purposes such as internal taxes, trade policies, monitoring of controlled goods, rules of origin, freight tariffs, transport statistics, price monitoring, quota controls, compilation of national accounts, and economic research and analysis.
- The HS is thus a **universal economic language and code for goods and an indispensable tool for international trade.**
- The Harmonized System is governed by "The International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System". The official interpretation of the HS is given in the Explanatory Notes (5 volumes in English and French) published by the WCO

NATIONAL HYDROLOGY PROJECT

Source: PIB & Ministry of Jal Shakti

National Hydrology Project was approved by the cabinet in 2016 as a central sector scheme which includes the National Hydrology Project (NHP) and the establishment of the National Water Informatics Centre (NWIC) as a repository of nation-wide water resources data. NWIC is envisaged as an independent organization with adequate administrative and financial powers under the overall control of Secretary, MoWR, RD&GR.

Project objectives

To improve the extent, quality, and accessibility of water resources information, the decision support system for floods and basin level resource assessment/planning and to strengthen the capacity of targeted water resources professionals and management institutions in India.

Key highlights

- It is a Central Sector Scheme, with 100% grant to the States

- Budget Outlay: about Rs3,640 Crore, with World Bank Assistance to the tune of 50% of the project cost
- Timeline: 8 years from 2016-17 to 2023-24
Lead Agency: Ministry of Jal Shakti, Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation

Project Components

1. **Water Resources Monitoring Systems:** This component will **finance the establishment/modernization of new and existing hydro** met monitoring systems including meteorology, streamflow, groundwater, water quality, and water storage measurements, and construction of hydro-informatics centers that capture both water resources and uses. This component will **be implemented by states/UTs with the support of core central agencies.**

The major activities will include

1. Establishment of hydro met observation networks
 2. Establishment of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems for water infrastructure and
 3. Establishment of hydro-informatics centers.
2. **Water Resources Information Systems:** This Component will support the strengthening of national and sub-national water information centres with web-enabled WRISs through standardization of databases and products from various data sources/departments and make comprehensive, timely, and integrated water resources information available to decision-makers for effective planning, decision making, and operations. Some of the key activities under this component are:
 1. Strengthening of India Water Resources Information System (WRIS); and
 2. Regional /State Water Resources Information System.
 3. **Water Resources Operations and Planning Systems:** This component will support the development of interactive analytical tools and decision support platform that would integrate database, models and scenario manager for

hydrological flood forecasting, integrated reservoir operations, and water resources accounting for improved operation, planning, and management of both surface water and groundwater, based on basin approach. It has three subcomponents:

1. Development of analytical tools and decision-support platform (river basin modeling, streamflow forecasting, and reservoir operation systems, and irrigation design and operations)
 2. Purpose-driven Support and
 3. Piloting innovative knowledge products.
4. **Institutional Capacity Enhancement:** This component aims to build capacity for knowledge-based water resources management. It will support **subcomponents in the establishment of** (i) water resources knowledge centres, (ii) professional development, (iii) project management, and (iv) operational support.

Beneficiaries

The project has two groups of direct beneficiaries:

1. Central and state implementing agencies (IAs) responsible for surface water and/or groundwater planning and management, including river basin organizations (RBOs) and
2. Users of the WRIS across various sectors and around the world. The ultimate beneficiaries will be the selected farm communities which benefited from pilot projects for water management; rural and urban water and power users; populations affected by floods and droughts, especially poor rural people, and farm families who may benefit from improved irrigation water supply and management; stakeholders across the energy, inland waterways, environment, and agriculture ministries; research and educational institutions; students and researchers; and non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

BIMSTEC PORTS' CONCLAVE

Source: Press Information Bureau

The first-ever BIMSTEC Ports' Conclave At Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh held on 7-8

November 2019. It was inaugurated by The Minister of State (I/C) for Shipping.

Key Highlights

- The Ports' First Conclave of BIMSTEC nations is expected to explore the possibility of increasing economic cooperation by furthering EXIM trade and coastal shipping.
- The Conclave discussed on various investment opportunities, best practices adopted for productivity and safety at Ports.
- The five-panel sessions that were held during the conclave are;
 1. Session on Port led Industrial and Tourism Development
 2. Emergent Roles of Ports in the Global Supply Chain
 3. Safe and Secure Ports
 4. Ports Services: Delivering Value
 5. Green Port Operations

About BIMSTEC

- **The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** is a regional organization involving a group of countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia namely, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal.
- The objective of the BIMSTEC alliance was to harness trade and accelerated growth with mutual cooperation in different areas of common interest by utilizing the regional resources and geographical advantage.

SHAALA DARPAN PORTAL

Source: Press Information Bureau

Recently the Minister of State for Human Resource Development launched Shaala Darpan portal, an E-Governance school automation, and management system for Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS)

Key highlights

- This single integrated platform has been developed for information sharing and knowledge dissemination for the employees and students across schools and offices of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti.

- Shaala Darpan is an end to end e-Governance school automation and management system.
- It has been implemented at Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti as the first major initiative to enable automation of all activities of the country's largest residential schooling system through a single umbrella
- The system has several pluggable components that can interact with each other. These are enlisted below:
 1. School Information and Management System for complete school automation
 2. Bilingual Content Management Portal for information dissemination
 3. Employee ERP to manage the day to day activities of all employees
 4. Budget & Finance management system
 5. Inventory & Store management system
 6. Library management system

Components of School Information and Management System:

- Student Management Information System
- Parent Guardian Information System
- Class & Teacher Management System
- Subject Management System
- Time Table Management System
- Attendance Monitoring with a mobile app
- Hostel & Mess management system for residential schools
- Student Health Card to monitor student health and vitals
- Assignment & Project Management System
- Exam & Results system
- Activities Management System

INDIA- ASEAN BUSINESS SUMMIT

Source: Press Information Bureau

The theme of the Summit

The India- ASEAN Business Summit on the theme: **“Today, Tomorrow, Together”** is being organized to strengthen trade & investment flows with ASEAN Economies.

Objective

The objective of the conference is to enhance the trade trajectory between India and ASEAN nations to new highs.

Key highlights

- The first day of the Summit is having sessions on Infrastructure and Tourism sectors, IT/ITES, E-Commerce and Fintech and Education & Skill Development, Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals and Agriculture & Food processing.
- On the second day of the summit, the B2B meetings will be organized along with a session on Focus Vietnam – Growing Trade & Commerce between India & Vietnam.

11TH BRICS SUMMIT

Source: PIB & The Hindu

The 11th summit of the BRICS grouping comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa was held in Brasilia

The theme of the summit- “Economic Growth for an Innovative Future”

The new areas of BRICS cooperation

The new areas of BRICS cooperation spearheaded by Brazil, are: strengthening of cooperation on science, technology and innovation; enhancement of cooperation on digital economy; invigoration of cooperation on the fight against transnational crime, especially against organized crime, money laundering and drug trafficking; and encouragement to the rapprochement between the New Development Bank (NDB) and the BRICS Business Council.

Outcomes of the Summit

- The **“urgent need” to reform the UN, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund,** and other international organizations was stressed once again, even as little progress has occurred on this score
- Interest in open and free trade was reiterated, despite growing protectionist tendencies.

- On the expansion of the UN Security Council, BRICS exposed its disunity yet again by sticking to the formulation that refuses to go beyond **China and Russia supporting the “aspiration” of Brazil, India and South Africa** “to play a greater role in the UN”.
- It’s **working group on countering terrorism** has expanded its activities through **five thematic subgroups** that deal with terrorist financing, use of the Internet for terrorist purposes, countering radicalization, issue of foreign terrorist fighters, and capacity building.
- The members welcomed the establishment of the Innovation BRICS Network (iBRICS); the adoption of the New Architecture on Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI), which will be implemented through the BRICS STI Steering Committee, and the Terms of Reference of the BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform
- With respect to the New Development Bank (NDB), The summit leaders are understood to have agreed on the criteria and probably on a list of nations as possible new members, although a formal decision has been left to the bank’s board of governors.
- Business promotion among member-states has been accorded a new salience. The BRICS Business Council held a substantive dialogue to foster cooperation in areas ranging from infrastructure and energy to financial services, regional aviation, and digital economy. Its cooperation with the NDB is being encouraged.
- The national trade promotion agencies signed an MoU on cooperation among themselves.
- A BRICS Women Business Alliance was created, both as a women empowerment measure and as a tool to bring “a distinctive perspective on issues of interest for the business community.”
- Following up on the decisions taken at the previous summit, the operationalization of the Partnership on the New Industrial Revolution is underway. It is focused on cooperation in digitalization, industrialization, innovation, inclusiveness, and investment.
- The stress on developing people-to-people interaction remains unchanged, with each chair-

country drawing up a calendar of activities to strengthen links of culture, arts, sports, media and academic exchange.

SWACHH – NIRMAL TAT ABHIYAAN

Source: Press Information Bureau

To strive to make our beaches clean and create awareness amongst citizens about the importance of coastal ecosystems, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) are undertaking a mass cleanliness-cum-awareness drive in 50 identified beaches under the “Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan”, from 11th -17th November 2019.

The beaches identified for the Abhiyan

The identified beaches are in 10 coastal States/Union Territories (UTs) namely Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. The beaches have been identified after the consultation with the States/UTs.

Key highlights

- The cleaning drives in all beaches are being undertaken, involving school/college students of Eco-clubs, district administration, institutions, volunteers, local communities and other stakeholders.
- State Nodal Agencies for the Eco-clubs will be facilitating the week-long intensive cleanliness drive in all 10 States/UTs. Nodal teachers from the Eco-clubs will be present at the sites during the entire cleanliness drive.
- For beach cleaning activities which will be a duration of two hours on daily basis, a minimum of one Kilometre stretch of the beach shall be identified. Beach sand cleaning machines shall also be deployed at about identified 15 beaches.
- Thereafter collected waste will be processed as per extant Waste Management Rules, 2016.
- Environment Education Division of the Ministry and Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) under the aegis of this Ministry will be responsible for the overall coordination for the drive in 50 beaches. The Ministry has also decided that on completion of the drive, best three beaches

will be suitably awarded along with a Certificate of Appreciation for all the participating Eco-clubs

GLOBAL EXHIBITION ON SERVICES (GES)-2019

Source: Press Information Bureau

The 5th edition of GES 2019 is being held from 26-28 November 2019 in Bengaluru, Karnataka. It is an attempt towards escalating the Indian services bar in the global arena by exploring 12 Champion Services Sectors, encompassing participation from 100 countries and hosting sector-specific knowledge sessions.

About GES

Aim

To engage industry and Governments across the world and to promote greater exchange of trade in services between India and the rest of the world

Who created the GES?

Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry in association with Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has created a dedicated platform, the Global Exhibition on Services (GES) which is an annual event.

What is done under GES?

- Through GES the Government of India seeks to enhance strategic cooperation and develop synergies to strengthen multilateral relationships between all stakeholders, tap the potential for services exports and increase FDI inflow.
- GES 2019 will host focussed knowledge sessions on **key Champion Services Sectors** and will cater to many B2B, B2G, and B2C meetings.
- In GES 2019 SEPC is also looking to promote eSports.
- **SEPC is organizing Nations Cup (International eSports Championship)** in association with the Electronic Sports Federation of India (ESFI) during GES 2019. The Nations Cup will be one of the key highlights during GES and will open up multiple avenues for the services industry particularly in eSports, gaming, and animation
- **An International Moot Court competition is also being organized during GES 2019 for**

young lawyers, who along with their seniors, will argue cases related to intellectual property rights. In this competition participants from **BIMSTEC** (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan) and **CLMV** (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) countries are expected.

About Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC)

- SEPC is an export promotion council set up by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India in 2006 as an apex trade body to facilitate service exporters of India.
- SEPC actively contributes to the formulation of policies of the Government of India and acts as an interface between the services industry and the Government.

PM UNAUTHORISED COLONIES IN DELHI AWAS ADHIKAR YOJANA (PM-UDAY)

Source: PIB & The Economic Times

Background on PM-UDAY:

Union Cabinet under the chairmanship of Prime Minister approved the **Conferring of Ownership/ Transfer Rights to the Residents of Unauthorised Colonies** on the 23rd of October 2019.

Union Cabinet has also approved the introduction of the bill in the ensuing session of Parliament to recognize ownership of property based on General Power of Attorney (GPA), Will, Agreement to Sell, Payment and Possession Document, etc.

Key highlights

- Under the PM-UDAY the Government will legalize all the unauthorized colonies with definite boundaries. People living in these colonies would be conferred/recognized with ownership /transfer/ mortgage rights
- Recently Centre has readied the formal framework to regularise 1,728 unauthorized colonies with a bill to give a one-time reprieve from income tax liability and levying of stamp duty for registration of properties.
- The government would introduce the **National Capital Territory of Delhi (Recognition of Property Rights of Residents in Unauthorised**

Colonies) Bill, 2019, in the upcoming winter session of Parliament

- Once the Bill is passed, the Centre would formally start the process under the scheme which has been named PM-UDAY
- The Cabinet had approved the regularisation of unauthorized colonies on October 23. The Bill will give a **one-time cover to residents from income tax liability**.
- After the Bill is passed, **the Delhi Development Authority, the nodal agency for implementation of the regularisation process**, will launch its web portal and then empanel agencies to fix geo-coordinates of plots.
- **PM-UDAY will require first self-assessment by the resident** which will be reviewed by field officers.
- Every resident in these areas will be required to open a **DigiLocker account** and upload documents related to the property in the unauthorized colony. The person will then take photographs of the property from the outside.

GOLDEN LEAF AWARD TO TOBACCO BOARD

Source: PIB

Recently Tobacco Board of India has been awarded the Golden Leaf Award in the Most Impressive Public Service Initiative category for the year 2019, for its efforts to initiate various sustainability (green) initiatives in Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco cultivation in India. This is the second time that the Tobacco Board had been awarded. In the year 2014, the board bagged the award for its implementation of an electronic auction system, which has made the marketing of flue-cured tobacco in India more transparent and accountable.

About the award

- Awards are granted on an annual basis to companies that have achieved **outstanding performance in five categories** -
 1. Most impressive public service initiative
 2. Most promising new product introduction
 3. Most exciting newcomer to the industry

4. Most outstanding service to the industry and
 5. The BMJ most committed to quality award.
- The Golden Leaf Awards were created to recognize professional excellence and dedication in the tobacco industry by Tobacco Reporter, an international magazine in the year 2006.

Initiatives of the Tobacco Board

Tobacco Board got this award for its best outstanding public service in sustainability to the industry for its initiatives on natural farming in tobacco cultivation for production of organic tobaccos, improving the soil health through green manuring, introduction of 365 days green cover in tobacco cultivation, promotion of advanced nursery technologies- Green Tech nurseries, elimination of Non-Tobacco Related Material (NTRM), elimination of pesticide residues in tobacco by encouraging residue-free tobacco cultivation, energy conservation initiatives resulting in energy savings of 25%, development of greenery through mandatory planting of trees by tobacco farmers and tobacco trade and educating and guiding farmers on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

Flue-cured tobacco in India

- India is the world's fourth-largest producer of FCV tobacco.
- About 88,000 FCV tobacco farmers and their families in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are dependent on this crop for their livelihood.

About Tobacco board

- Tobacco Board is a statutory body established under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The main functions of the Board include regulating the production and curing of Virginia tobacco in India, implementation of extension and developmental activities for improving the yields and quality of tobacco, facilitating sale of tobacco through e-auctions on the auction floors of the Board, undertaking various grower welfare measures and export promotion of tobacco and tobacco products.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON YOGA FOR HEART CARE

Source: PIB

The Ministry of AYUSH organized the International Conference on Yoga on 15-16 November 2019 at Mysuru, Karnataka.

Key highlights

- The theme of the conference is 'Yoga for Heart Care'
- Indian Missions in countries with whom the ministry has some kind of cooperation such as MoUs, Chairs, Information cells, etc. have been requested to identify two prominent Yoga experts or enthusiasts from the country/countries under their jurisdiction, who would be interested to participate in the Conference to enable them capture and understand various dimensions of Yoga, and could help them to further propagate the same in their respective countries.
- The Ministry of AYUSH bears the expenses on local hospitality including boarding, lodging, local transport, of the nominated yoga experts/enthusiasts.
- **This conference is the fifth in the series** to commemorate the unanimous adoption of Resolution by the United Nations General Assembly during its 69th Session for observing 21st June as International Day of Yoga.

6TH WORLD CONGRESS ON RURAL AND AGRICULTURE FINANCE

Source: PIB & Rural Finance and Investment Learning Centre

Key highlights

- The 6th World Congress was hosted by the Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and Ministry of Agriculture Farmers Welfare and Cooperation, Government of India.
- The Congress is co-organized in collaboration with four other global and regional associations:

1. Confédération Internationale du Crédit Agricole (CICA)
 2. African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (AFRACA)
 3. Asociación Latinoamericana de Instituciones Financieras Para el Desarrollo (ALIDE)
 4. Near East-North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA).
- The representatives of banks and financial institutions from over 40 countries such as China, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, etc. have gathered in New Delhi to deliberate on the subject of Rural and Agriculture Finance: Critical Input to Achieve Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

About Asia - Pacific Rural Agricultural and Credit Association (APRACA)

- APRACA, representing 81 member institutions from 21 countries, is a regional association that promotes cooperation and facilitates mutual exchange of information and expertise in the field of rural finance.
- Over the years it has developed a repository of knowledge in managing and serving rural financial institutions, financial inclusion and to help avert financial risks and improve efficiency.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF (HADR) EXERCISE

Source: PIB

In consonance with the growing partnership between India and the US, the **maiden India US joint Tri services Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise named 'TIGER TRIUMPH'** is scheduled on the Eastern seaboard from 13 to 21 Nov 19.

Key highlights

- The nine-day humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) exercise code-named 'Tiger Triumph' is **aimed at developing interoperability between the militaries of the two countries in HADR operations**

- Indian Naval ships Jalashwa, Airavat, and Sandhayak were part of the exercise and Indian Army troops from 19 Madras and 7 Guards, and Indian Air Force MI-17 helicopters and Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT) would be participating in the exercise.
- The US was represented by US Navy ship Germantown with troops from the US Third Marine Division.
- At the HADR Exercise Area, a Joint Command and Control Centre was established jointly by the Indian Army and US Marines.
- The IAFRAMT and the US Navy Medical Team established a Medical Facility Camp for providing medical aid to victims, who would have been previously evacuated by road and air to the Camp.
- In June 2016, the US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner," intending to elevate defence trade and technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.

THE REGIONAL PLAN-2041 FOR NCR

Source: PIB

The inaugural conclave "NCR-2041" with the **theme "Planning for Tomorrow's Greatest Capital Region"** was held in the national capital on 11th November 2019

Background

The Regional Plan with the horizon year 2021 was notified on the 17th of September 2005 and is presently in force. A Regional Plan with the next horizon year 2041 is required to be prepared now. The Regional Plan addresses various sectors namely Transport, Water, Sewerage, Solid Waste, Power, Regional Land use, etc. **As per a report by United Nation, Delhi is slated to become the world's largest metropolis overtaking Tokyo by 2028.**

Who organized it?

National Capital Region -2041" was organized by the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB)

Participants

The Conclave had participation from all NCR participating States, concerned

Ministries/Departments of Government of India, Knowledge Institutions, Industries, Housing Associations, Subject Experts, Field Officers from various districts, and other stakeholders.

About NCR

The National Capital Region (NCR) is a distinct federal setup having the National Capital Territory of Delhi as its core. It is a unique example of inter-state regional planning and development. The NCR covers around 55,083 sq.kms. of the area with around 60 million population. The constituent areas of the National Capital Region are as under:

1. Entire National Capital Territory of **Delhi**
2. **Haryana** sub-region comprises of the districts of Gurugram, Faridabad, Rohtak, Sonapat, Rewari, Jhajjar, Mewat, Palwal, Panipat, Mahendregarh, Jind, Karnal, Bhiwani, and Charkhi Dadri.
3. **Rajasthan** sub-region comprises districts of Alwar and Bharatpur.
4. **Uttar Pradesh** Sub-region comprises of the districts of Gautam Buddha Nagar, Ghaziabad, Meerut, Bulandsahr, Baghpat, Hapur, Muzaffarnagar, and Shamli.

About National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB)

- It was constituted by the Act of Parliament in 1985, as a statutory body under the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Govt. of India.
- The NCRPB is tasked to evolve harmonized policies for the control of land-uses and development of infrastructure in the region so as to avoid any haphazard development.

SCHEME FOR PROMOTION OF ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH COLLABORATION

Source: PIB & Ministry of HRD

Key highlights

- SPARC aims at improving the research ecosystem of India's Higher Educational Institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world from 28 selected nations to jointly solve problems of national and/or international relevance.

- The scheme proposes to enable productive academic co-operation by supporting the following critical components that can catalyze impact making research, namely:

1. Visits and long-term stay of top international faculty/researchers in Indian institutions to pursue teaching and research
2. Visits by Indian students for training and experimentation in premier laboratories worldwide
3. Joint development of niche courses, world-class books and monographs, translatable patents, demonstrable technologies or action research outcomes and products
4. Consolidation of Bilateral co-operation through academic and research partnerships through Indo-X Workshops in India
5. Publication, Dissemination, and Visibility through a high profile annual International Conference in India

Outcomes

The expected outcomes include tangible results in terms of large quantity of high quality research publications, solution to key national and international problems, development of niche courses, high quality textbooks and research monographs, imbibing of best practices from top international academicians and researchers, strong bilateral cooperation, and improved world reputation and ranking of Indian Institutions.

GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR ACADEMIC NETWORKS(GIAN)

Source: PIB & Ministry of HRD

About GIAN

- GIAN was launched by Ministry of Human Resource Development
- It is intended to enlarge and deepen the interface of India's institutions of higher learning and globally recognized institutions of academic eminence.
- Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN) in Higher Education aimed at tapping the talent pool of scientists and entrepreneurs internationally to encourage their engagement with the institutes of

Higher Education in India so as to augment the country's existing academic resources, accelerate the pace of quality reform, and elevate India's scientific and technological capacity to global excellence.

- GIAN is envisaged to catalyze higher education institutions in the country, and that it will initially include all IITs, IIMs, Central Universities, IISc Bangalore, IISERs, NITs, and IIITs subsequently cover good State Universities where the spinoff is vast.
- GIAN is an evolving scheme that will initially include the participation of foreign faculty in Institutes as Distinguished / Adjunct / Visiting faculty / Professors of Practice, etc., to participate in delivering Short or Semester-long Courses.
- The proposed GIAN is envisaged to achieve the following objectives:
 1. To increase the footfalls of reputed international faculty in the Indian academic institutes.
 2. Provide the opportunity to our faculty to learn and share knowledge and teaching skills in cutting edge areas.
 3. To provide an opportunity to our students to seek knowledge and experience from reputed International faculty.
 4. To create an avenue for possible collaborative research with the international faculty
 5. To increase the participation and presence of international students in the academic Institutes.
 6. Opportunity for the students of different Institutes/Universities to interact and learn subjects in niche areas through the collaborative learning process.
 7. Provide the opportunity for the technical persons from the Indian Industry to improve understandings and update their knowledge in relevant areas.
 8. Motivate the best international experts in the world to work on problems related to India.
 9. Develop high-quality course material in niche areas, both through video and print that can

be used by a larger body of students and teachers.

10. To document and develop new pedagogic methods in emerging topics of national and international interest.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON LIGHTING (ISOL)

Source: PIB & ICAT

Minister of State for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises inaugurated the International Symposium on Lighting (iSoL) today at the International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT), Manesar in Gurugram.

About the International Symposium on Lighting (iSoL)

- The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) organizes International Symposium on lighting (iSoL).
- This biennial event is one of the biggest automotive lighting symposiums in the Asia Pacific region.
- The two days Symposium provides a common platform to professionals related directly or indirectly to the automotive lighting fraternity from all around the globe.
- The participants include experts from the automotive industry, the automotive lighting industry, rule makers, test houses, research centres, educational institutes & associations, etc.
- In this event, the professionals share their experiences and learn about the trends & innovation in automotive lighting technology.
- During iSoL 2019 panel discussions have also been organized on Intelligent Lighting: The Road Ahead and Road Safety in Dark hours: Assisting and Alarming Technologies organized.

International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT)

- The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) was established in 2006 at Manesar, Haryana, India
- It is a leading world-class automotive testing, certification and R&D service provider under the

aegeis of NATRiP (National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project), Government of India.

- ICAT is providing quality services to the industry in all the domains of automotive and non-automotive development, such as Powertrain, Noise Vibration, and Harshness, Component, Fatigue, Photometry, Tyre & Wheel, Passive Safety.

11TH MAITREE DIWAS CELEBRATIONS

Source: PIB

Recently the Defence Minister attended the 11th Maitree Diwas Celebrations in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh

About Maitree Diwas

- The festival symbolizes the patriotism of the people of the region and their close relationship with the Armed Forces
- The two-day socio-military cultural extravaganza was jointly organized by the Indian Army, Tawang Civil Administration and volunteers at the High-Altitude Stadium
- 'Know Your Army' was the theme of the event that enlightened the youth about the Armed Forces and motivated them to adorn the uniform one day and serve the motherland.
- During the event, the Minister announced that the Government of India is planning to set up a **Northeast Industrial Corridor** which would create several job opportunities for the people of the region.

MERGER OF BNP PARIBAS (BNPP) MUTUAL FUND AND BARODA (BOB) MUTUAL FUND

Source: PIB

Recently the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** approved the merger of BNP Paribas (BNPP)(an International bank) Mutual Fund and Baroda (BOB) Mutual Fund, under Section the Competition Act, 2002

Key highlights

- The Proposed Combination relates to the merger of the BNP Paribas Mutual Fund and the BOB Mutual Fund. The Parties propose to amalgamate
 - BOB Asset Management Company (AMC) into BNPP AMC; and
 - BNPP Trustee Company (TC) into BOB TC. After the merger, BNPP AMC and BOB TC will be the surviving entities
- BNPP AMC is the dedicated AMC for BNPP Mutual Fund and acts as the investment manager of the BNPP Mutual Fund. BNPP AMC is also registered as a Portfolio Manager under SEBI Regulations. It provides portfolio management services and advisory activities. BNPP TC is the trustee company of the BNPP Mutual Fund.
- BOB AMC is the dedicated AMC for BOB Mutual Fund and acts as the investment manager of BOB Mutual Fund. BOB TC acts as the trustee for BOB Mutual Fund.

INDIA SKILLS 2020

Source: PIB

The Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has announced the opening of online registrations for IndiaSkills 2020, a biennial competition to scout talent from the country, offering them a platform to showcase their skills at national and international competitions.

About India Skills 2020

- IndiaSkills 2020 provides a platform for skilled and talented Indian youngsters to showcase their abilities at regional and national level competitions in over 50 skills.
- Regional legs of the competitions are organized across four zones, culminating at the national competition in Delhi.
- Winners of IndiaSkills will then get a chance to represent the country at the **WorldSkills International Competition to be held in China in 2021**.
- The age limit for the competition is for youth born on or after 1 January 1999.
- The youth can choose participation in over 50 skill trades such as mechatronics, manufacturing team challenge, aeronautical engineering, cloud

computing, cybersecurity, baking, beauty therapy, hairdressing, carpentry, water technology and IT network cabling among others. Post the skill competitions held at the district, state and regional level, IndiaSkills National Competition will be organized in 2020.

- The competitions will be organized by states and will be supported by National Skill Development Corporation, in partnership Sector Skill Councils, Industry Partners, Corporates and Academic Organizations.
- Alongside IndiaSkills Competitions, Abilympics, Olympics of Abilities will also be organized, specifically designed for specially-abled individuals to express their unique talents.

THE 8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS (ICAS-VIII)



Source: PIB

The 8th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-VIII) was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture in New Delhi from 18th to 21st November 2019.

Theme

The theme of this year's ICAS is 'Statistics for the Transformation of Agriculture to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'.

Who organized it?

The conference was organised in collaboration with the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**, ICAR-Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute (ICAR-IASRI), Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics (ISAS) and National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) International Statistical Institute, Committee on Agricultural Statistics (IS-ICAS), FAO, the USDA, ADB, **World Bank**, **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**, Eurostat, AfD (African Development Bank) and various other organizations.

About ICAS

- ICAS is a series of conferences that started in 1998 based on the overarching need for agricultural data worldwide.
- The conference is conducted every three years based on the overarching need for agricultural data worldwide and the last conference was held in Rome in 2016.

GLOBAL COOLING PRIZE

Source: PIB

Union Minister for Science & Technology announced the finalists of the 'Global Cooling Prize' (GCP) at an Award Ceremony being **organized by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Mission Innovation (MI) programme**. The Global Cooling Prize is rallying a **global coalition of leaders to solve the critical climate threat** that comes from growing demand for residential air conditioning.

Aim of GCP

GCP aims to **spur the development of a residential cooling solution** that has at least five times (5x) less climate impact than today's standard products.

Who launched the GCP?

Department of Science & Technology (DST) in partnership with BEE & MoEF&CC has launched GCP jointly with Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), an independent non-profit research institute and think tank founded in 1982 in the US, to spur development of residential cooling solution that has drastically (up to five times) less climate impact than today's standard products especially contextualized to Indian context.

Mission Innovation and challenges

- Mission Innovation (MI) is a global initiative of 24 countries and the European Union to accelerate global clean energy innovation.
- MI identified the "Affordable Heating and Cooling of Building Innovation Challenge" as one of the seven innovation challenges.
- India agreed to its engagement as MI Member for the **Mission Innovation Challenge # 7: Affordable Heating and Cooling Challenge**.

- **The objective of the MI Challenge #7 is to make low carbon heating and cooling affordable for everyone.**

MELPL – VISIONARY INDO – FRENCH COLLABORATION

Source: PIB

Indian Railways has entered into Procurement cum Maintenance Agreement with Madhepura Electric Locomotive Pvt. Ltd. (MELPL), a joint venture of Indian Railways and M/s Alstom(French Company).

Key highlights

- As part of the **largest Foreign Direct Investment project of Indian Railways**, Ministry of Railways and Alstom came together in 2015 to transform the heavy freight transportation landscape of the country. A landmark agreement worth 3.5 billion Euro was signed to manufacture 800 electric locomotives for freight service and its associated maintenance.
- Alstom has delivered prototype locomotive in March 2018. Based on the test results, Alstom has redesigned the complete locomotive including bogies.
- The new design of locomotive has been inspected by RDSO at Madhepura factory and cleared for dispatch from the factory.
- This is the first time such High HorsePower locomotive is being tested on Broad Gauge network in the World by any Railways.
- As part of the project, the factory along with township has been set up in Madhepura, Bihar with the capacity to manufacture 120 locomotives per year.
- The project will create more than 10,000 direct and indirect jobs in the country.

Benefits of Project

- Indian Railways have taken the decision to have 12000 horsepower twin Bo-Bo design Locomotive with 22.5 T (Tonnes) axle load upgradable to 25Tonnes with a design speed of 120 kmph.
- This locomotive will be game-changer for further movement of coal trains for Dedicated Freight Corridor. With the success of this project it will

boost the “Make in India” programme of the Government of India.

- This will further develop ancillary units for locomotive components.
- The project will allow faster and safer movement of heavier freight trains.
- With 100% electrification, the new locomotive will not only bring down the operational cost for Railways, the locomotive will also reduce the congestion faced by Indian Railways.
- This will be used to haul heavier trains such as coal and iron ore.

39TH INDIA INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR (IITF)

Source: PIB

Theme

The theme for this edition of the Fair is “Ease of Doing Business” inspired by the unique achievement of India of rising up to the 63rd rank on the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index from 142nd rank in the year 2014.

About IITF

- IITF offers the opportunity for large corporations, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), non-government agencies, artisans, self-help groups (SHGs), etc. to promote their products and services to a very large sample of potential customers.
- The fair is an important platform for various central and state government departments and agencies for the dissemination of information on progressive reforms, new schemes and initiatives.
- It serves as a convergence point for government agencies, private sector enterprises, and non-government institutions that have aligned their activities with the country’s development objectives.
- Several countries, including Australia, Iran, UK, Vietnam, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Egypt, Hong Kong, and Indonesia, are participating in the 14-day trade fair.

- This year, the status of Partner Country has been accorded to Afghanistan, while Bihar and Jharkhand are the focus States.
- The history of IITF is closely interwoven with India's struggle for socio-economic empowerment and industrialization and its emergence as one of the most rapidly growing and dominant global economies.
- The Fair has been a unique platform for displaying the entrepreneurial skills and ingenuity of the people of India.

WATER QUALITY REPORT FOR STATE CAPITALS & DELHI

Source: PIB

The Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution released the Water Quality Report for State Capitals & Delhi as analyzed by BIS. The Minister has mentioned that this is released in line with the Jeevan Mission, announced by Prime Minister which aims to provide tap water to all households by 2024.

Key highlights

- In order to ensure that clean and safe drinking water is provided to all, Department of Consumer Affairs decided to undertake a study through the Bureau of India Standards (BIS) on the quality of piped drinking water being supplied in the country and also rank the States, Smart Cities and even Districts based on the quality of tap water.
- In the first phase, the samples of drinking water were drawn from various locations across Delhi and in the second phase samples were drawn from 20 State capitals and sent for testing as per Indian Standard 10500:2012 (Specification for Drinking water) as set by the BIS.
- The minister also added that in the third phase, samples from Capital cities of North Eastern States and Smart Cities identified by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs have been drawn and are being tested. The result of these are expected by 15th January 2020.

- While in the fourth phase, it is proposed to test samples drawn from all the district headquarters of the country and their testing is planned to be completed by 15th August 2020.
- Tests were conducted on various parameters such as;
 1. Organoleptic and Physical Tests,
 2. Chemical test,
 3. Toxic substances and Bacteriological tests in the first stage.
- A vast majority of the samples have failed to comply with the requirements of IS 10500:2012 in one or more parameters.
- **In Delhi, all the 11 samples drawn from various places did not comply** with the requirements of the Indian Standard & failed on several parameters.
- **All the 10 samples drawn from Mumbai were found to comply with the requirements.**
- In the cities of Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Ranchi, Raipur, Amravati and Shimla, one or more samples did not comply with the requirements of the Standard and
- **None of the samples drawn from 13 of the State Capitals** i.e. Chandigarh, Thiruvananthapuram, Patna, Bhopal, Guwahati, Bengaluru, Gandhinagar, Lucknow, Jammu, Jaipur, Dehradun, Chennai, Kolkata **complied with the requirements of the Indian Standard.**

NATIONAL TRIBAL FESTIVAL "AADI MAHOTSAV"

Source: PIB

Theme

The theme of the 15 days' Mahotsav (16th to 30th November 2019) is: "A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Craft, Cuisine and Commerce".

Key highlights

- The festival featured exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, art, paintings, fabric, jewelry
- For the first time, this AADI MAHOTSAV showcased a wide range of products from the tribal artisans from Leh (Ladakh).

- The Mahotsav is displaying the rich digital commerce and e-commerce being promoted by Tribes India.
- The Aadi Mahotsav is an effort to take tribal commerce to the next level of digital and electronic transactions.
- The Mahotsav apart from exotic handicrafts is also showcasing the electronic and digital skills of the tribals as a special attraction.
- TRIFED an organization of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has started a new concept of organizing the “Aadi Mahotsav – National Tribal Festival” to provide direct market access to the tribal master-craftsmen and women in large metros and State capitals.

NITI AAYOG’S HEALTH SYSTEMS FOR A NEW INDIA: BUILDING BLOCKS— POTENTIAL PATHWAYS TO REFORMS

Source: PIB & NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog releases Report on Building a 21st Century Health System for India. This report is intended to initiate a discussion and a dialogue amongst all the relevant stakeholders and policymakers who are interested in the projectory of our health system in the medium to long term

About the report

- The report reveals India’s health system as a story of multiple fragmentations at the level of payers and risk pools, healthcare services and at digital backbone running it.
- The report integrates viewpoints on the concerted efforts required for strengthening the existing fractured health system, to meet the challenges that lie ahead of the nation.
- **The report is based on the data collected and provided by ACCESS Health International** for the public sector and by PWC India for the private sector.
- Consultations as a part of NITI Aayog’s ‘**Development Dialogues**’ series have been initiated to generate debate and discussions on

the vision of the nation. NITI launched this series with a workshop titled ‘Health System for a New India: Building Blocks’ on 30 November 2018.

- The dialogue engaged international and national experts and key stakeholders to engender an informed discussion and debate on the trajectory of India’s health system.
- Through this and further dialogues in this area, **NITI aims to facilitate multi-sectoral and stakeholder conversations on a systemic approach to reforming healthcare in India**, looking at interlinked changes across the multiple building blocks of its health system.

Challenges identified by the report

- India’s health system is lagging behind comparable countries in many key system’s performance indicators

	India	China	Sri Lanka	Indonesia	Egypt	Philippines
Total Health Expenditures as % of GDP	4.0%	5.5%	4%	3%	5%	4%
Fiscal Health Expenditures as % of GDP	0.9%	3.2%	2%	1%	1%	1.3%
Per capita Health Expenditures (PPP)	239	761	401	303	516	342
Level of Out-of-pocket (% Total Health Expenditures)	64%	36%	50%	60%	62%	54%
Neo-Natal Mortality 1980	60	63	24	41	53	27
Neo-Natal Mortality 2016	25	5	7	13	12	13
Global Healthcare rank ¹	145	92	71	138	111	124
Burden of Disease (DALYs per 100,000 population)	34,000	26,100	24,000	28,000	28,000	31,000

- Health financing is fragmented at all three levels —revenue sources, health insurance (financial risk pooling), and strategic purchasing (how funds are used to set incentives for service providers to maximize efficiency, responsiveness, and quality in the health service provider market).
- Risk pooling — before the advent of PM-JAY — was very low, with less than 35 percent of the population participating in any risk pooling scheme and less than 10 percent being covered by a functioning risk pooling mechanism (one that provides effective protection against catastrophic events).
- The high level of out-of-pocket expenditure is also a clear sign of the lack of risk pooling.

Five focus areas

The report identified 5 focus areas of the future health system, they are;

1. Deliver on unfinished Public health agenda

2. Change health financing away from out of pocket so spend into large insurers
3. Integrate service delivery vertically and horizontally
4. Empower citizens to become better buyers of health
5. Harness the power of digital health.

HOUSEHOLD CONSUMER EXPENDITURE SURVEY

Source: PIB & The Hindu

The government announced that in view of “data quality issues” the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation had decided not to release the results of the all-India Household Consumer Expenditure Survey conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) during 2017-2018.

The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation carried out an all-India survey on household consumption expenditure in the 75th round during the period July 2017 to June 2018.

About the Consumer Expenditure Survey

- The Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) is **usually conducted at quinquennial intervals (recurring every five years)** and the last survey on consumer expenditure was conducted in the 68th round (July 2011 to June 2012).
- The NSS Consumer Expenditure Survey generates **estimates of household Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) and the distribution of households** and persons over the MPCE classes.
- It is designed to collect information regarding expenditure on the consumption of goods and services (food and non-food) consumed by households.

Uses of the CES

- The estimates of monthly per capita consumption spending are vital in **gauging the demand dynamics of the economy** as well as for understanding the shifting priorities in terms of baskets of goods and services, and in assessing living standards and growth trends across multiple strata.

- From **helping policymakers spot and address possible structural anomalies that may cause demand to shift** in a particular manner in a specific socio-economic or regional cohort of the population, to providing pointers to producers of goods and providers of services, the CES is an invaluable analytical as well as forecasting tool.
- It is, in fact, **used by the government in rebasing the GDP and other macro-economic indicators.**

BHARATIYA POSHAN KRISHI KOSH (BPKK)

Source: PIB

The Union Minister of Women and Child Development (WCD) and Textiles along with Bill Gates, co-chair of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh (BPKK)

Key Highlights

- The BPKK will be a repository of diverse crops across 128 agro-climatic zones in India for better nutritional outcomes.
- At the request of the Ministry of WCD, the Harvard Chan School of Public Health through its India Research Center and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will document and evaluate promising regional dietary practices and the messaging around them and develop a food atlas on regional agro-food systems. Both efforts are aimed at mobilizing the diverse sectors of the society.
- In consultation with the Ministry of WCD and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the project team will select around 12 high focus states which are representative of the geographical, social, economic, cultural and structural diversities of India.
- In each of the states or group of states, the team will identify a local partner organization which has relevant work experience in Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) and nutrition for developing the food atlas.

MARITIME EXERCISE ZA'IR-AL-BAHR (ROAR OF THE SEA)-2019

Source: PIB

The Key Highlights

- The first Indo-Qatari joint naval Exercise Za'ir-Al-Bahr was held in Doha
- Named Za'ir-Al-Bahr (Roar of the sea), the five-day exercise is being carried out to strengthen co-operation and enhance interoperability between the two navies.
- The Exercise will include a three-day Harbour Phase and Two days Sea Phase.
- The Sea Phase will include a Tactical Maritime Exercise involving the domains of Surface Action, Air Defence, Maritime Surveillance and Interdiction Operation and anti-terrorism.
- Indian Navy was represented by Guided Missile Stealth Frigate **INS Trikand**
- **Qatari Emiri Naval was represented by Patrol Aircraft P8-I.** The P8-I Maritime Patrol Aircraft incorporates the latest technology for Maritime Surveillance.
- The Qatari Emiri Naval Forces participating in this Exercise include the versatile Anti-Ship Missile equipped Barzan Class Fast Attack Craft along with Rafale multi-task fighter aircraft.

Significance

The inaugural edition of the Bilateral Maritime Exercise between the two navies would further strengthen the robust defence co-operation between the two countries, especially in the fight against terrorism, maritime piracy, and maritime security.

COMPANY LAW COMMITTEE REPORT- 2019

Source: PIB

The law Company Law Committee submitted the report to the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs

About the Law Committee

- The Company Law Committee **was constituted by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in September 2019**, inter alia, to further **decriminalize the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013** based on their gravity and to take other concomitant

measures to provide further Ease of Living for corporates in the country.

- The committee was chaired by **Shri Injeti Srinivas, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs**
- The Committee took note of the progress made consequent to the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2019, which had resulted in de-criminalisation of 16 minor procedural/technical lapses under the Companies Act, 2013 into 'civil wrongs', and adopted a principle-based approach to further remove criminality, in case of defaults which can be determined objectively and which, otherwise, lack the element of fraud or do not involve larger public interest.

Some of the recommendations of the committee

- Re-categorising 23 offences out of the 66 remaining compoundable offences under the Act, to be dealt with in the in-house adjudication framework wherein these defaults would be subject to a penalty levied by an adjudicating officer
- Retention of status-quo in case of the non-compoundable offences.
- Committee has made recommendations targeted towards providing further ease of living for law-abiding corporates, which are as follows:
 1. Power to exclude a certain class of companies from the definition of 'listed company', mainly for the listing of debt securities, in consultation with SEBI
 2. Clarifying the trial court's jurisdiction on the basis of place of commission of an offence under Section 452, for wrongful withholding of property of a company by its officers/employees
 3. Including the provisions of Part IXA (Producer Companies) of the Companies Act, 1956 in the Companies Act, 2013
 4. Proposing benches of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal
 5. Provisions for allowing payment of adequate remuneration to non-executive directors in case of inadequacy of profits, by aligning the

same with the provisions for remuneration to executive directors in such cases

6. Extending exemptions from the filing of certain resolutions to certain classes of non-banking financial companies under Section 117 in consultation with RBI
7. Non-levy of penalties for delay in filing the annual returns and financial statements in certain cases

In addition, the committee while deliberating on certain other issues felt that wider consultation would be necessary and **recommended that the following be taken up in due course, at a later stage;**

- Providing for an appeal against the orders of the Regional Directors before the NCLT after due examination
- Exempting certain private placement requirements for Qualified Institutional Placements (QIPs) after due consultation with SEBI
- Reviewing provisions on disqualification of directors after due consultation and examination
- Reviewing provisions in respect of debarment of audit firms after due consultation and examination

NATIONAL MISSION ON CULTURAL MAPPING (NMCM)

Source: PIB & Ministry of Culture

Vision & Mission

- To envision and address the necessity of preserving the threads of rich Indian Art and Cultural Heritage
- To Convert vast and widespread cultural canvass of India into an objective Cultural Mapping
- To Design a mechanism to fulfill the aspirations of the whole artist community of the nation
- To Preserve the rich cultural heritage of this country for future generations
- To create a strong "Cultural Vibrancy" throughout the nation

Objectives of the Mission

Under this Mission, at broad-level, there are three important objectives as follows:

1. National Cultural Awareness Abhiyan: Hamari Sanskriti Hamari Pahchan Abhiyan OR Our Culture Our Identity
2. Nationwide Artist Talent Hunt/Scouting Programme: Sanskritik Pratibha Khoj Abhiyan
3. National Cultural Workplace: Centralised Transactional Web Portal with database and demography of cultural assets and resources including all art forms and artists.

About NMCM

- NMCM has been set up by the Ministry of Culture in 2017
- This mission will compile data of artists, art forms & geo-location with inputs from Central Ministries, State Governments & art/culture bodies.
- Specially designed data capture form with technical collaboration of the National E-Governance Division (NEGD)/Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) has been formulated for data collection.
- The Mission encompasses data mapping, demography building, formalizing the processes and bringing all cultural activities under one umbrella for better results.

THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE KIMBERLEY PROCESS CERTIFICATION SCHEME (KPCS) 2019

Source: PIB

The Plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) was hosted by India, the present Kimberley Process (KP) Chair, from 18th to 22nd November 2019 in New Delhi.

India and Kimberley process

India is one of the founder members of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and is the Chair of the Kimberley Process for the year 2019. India had earlier chaired KPCS in the year 2008.

About the Kimberley process

- The Kimberley Process is a joint initiative involving Government, International Diamond Industry and Civil Society to stem the flow of Conflict Diamonds.
- “Conflict Diamonds” means rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments.
- It is also described in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions
- In 1998, certain rebel movements in Africa (Sierra Leone, Angola, D.R. of Congo, Liberia) were selling, among other things, illegally obtained diamonds – known as conflict diamonds – to fund their wars against legitimate governments.
- With a view to find ways to stop the trade in conflict diamonds, the world’s diamond industry, United Nations, Governments and leading NGOs came together and in November 2002 at Interlaken, where the final draft of the Kimberley Process measures were ratified by more than fifty nations.
- The KPCS came into effect from 1st January 2003 and evolved into an effective mechanism for stopping the trade in conflict diamonds.
- At present, KPCS has 55 members representing 82 countries including EU with 28 members.
- The Kimberley Process is chaired, on a rotating basis, by participating countries.
- KP Vice-Chair is generally elected by KP Plenary each year who becomes the Chair in the next year.
- India is the current Chair of KPCS with the Russian Federation as Vice-Chair for the year 2019.

6TH NATIONAL SUMMIT ON GOOD, REPLICABLE PRACTICES AND INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS

Source: PIB

The Minister for Health and Family Welfare inaugurated the 6th National Summit on Good, Replicable Practices and Innovations in Public Health

Care Systems. The Summit saw the **launch of the SAANS campaign i.e. “Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully” to control Pneumonia.**

SAANS campaign

- This campaign will mobilize people’s for protecting and preventing children from pneumonia; and health personnel, governments & other stakeholders to prioritize treatment towards the control of Pneumonia — one of the most fatal childhood illnesses.
- Under the SAANS campaign, new interventions have been included like a child suffering from Pneumonia will be treated with pre-referral dose of Amoxicillin by ASHA; Pulse Oximeter will be used at the Health and Wellness Centre for identification of low oxygen levels in the blood and if required treated by use of Oxygen.
- The initiative also aims to create mass awareness about the most effective solutions for pneumonia prevention like breastfeeding, age-appropriate complementary feeding, immunization, good quality air, etc.

The web portal for home-based care of children including newborn visited by ASHA was also launched at the Summit.

The web portal for home-based care of children including newborn visited by ASHA

- This portal has all the resource materials (training materials, IEC videos, audios, banners, posters, etc.) for the home visits of ASHAs.
- The portal will also be used to monitor the progress of programs regarding home visits by ASHAs and referral of sick newborns, an intervention considered globally as game-changer to improve child survival and also improve nutritional status and overall development of children.

TRAVEL & TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS INDEX

Source: World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum has released the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report and Index in September 2019. **India’s ranking improved from**

40th to 34th, the greatest improvement over 2017 among the top 25 per cent of all countries ranked in the report

About the Travel & Tourism competitiveness Index

- Published biennially, Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report and Index benchmarks the T&T competitiveness of 140 economies and measures the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the Travel & Tourism (T&T) sector, which in turn, contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country.
- The index has been developed in the context of the World Economic Forum's Industry Programme for Aviation, Travel and Tourism, as part of the Platform for Shaping the Future of Mobility
- It is undertaken in close collaboration with **World Economic Forum's data partners Bloom Consulting, STR Global, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).**
- Top five countries in the 2019 index are; Spain, France, Germany, Japan and The USA
- Published **under the theme of "Travel and Tourism at a Tipping Point"**, the report's results demonstrate the healthy growth of the industry, with increased competitiveness worldwide set against the slower improvement and adoption rates of necessary infrastructure and sustainable tourism management practices respectively
- The results of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 provides a tool for stakeholders to assess opportunities and anticipate pain points that will unlock, or hinder, the long-term prosperity and positive impact of the sector.

The TAT Competitiveness Index 2019 framework



TARGET OLYMPIC PODIUM (TOP) SCHEME

Source: PIB

Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme was formulated in July 2014 under overall ambit of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) with the **aim to identify, groom and prepare potential medal prospects for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.**

About the scheme

- The Target Olympic Podium Scheme is a flagship program of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports which is an attempt to provide assistance to India's top athletes.
- The Scheme looks to add a premium to the preparations of these athletes so that they can win Olympic medals in 2020 and 2024 Olympics.
- Under the Scheme, the Department of Sports shall identify athletes who are potential medal winners in 2020 / 2024 Olympics.
- The idea of the Scheme is to also keep an eye on the future and fund a Developmental Group of Athletes who are medal prospects for the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024 and Los Angeles Games in 2028.

Mission Olympic Cell (MOC)

The Mission Olympic Cell is a dedicated body created to assist the athletes who are selected under the TOP Scheme. The MOC is under the Chairmanship of the Director General, Sports Authority (DG, SAI). The Committee meetings are attended by representatives of the respective National Sports Federations (NSFs) and Project Officers of the SAI besides other members. The idea of the MOC is to debate, discuss and decide

the processes and methods so that the athlete receives the best assistance. The MOC also focuses on selection, exclusion and retention of athletes, coaches, training institutes that can receive TOPS assistance.

High priority sports categorized under the scheme

(i) Athletics, (ii) Badminton (iii) Hockey (iv) Shooting (v) Tennis (vi) Weightlifting (vii) Wrestling, (viii) Archery and (ix) Boxing

Scheme of Assistance

The main objective of the Scheme is to provide added impetus towards the athlete's preparations, over and above what is planned under the Annual Calendar of Training and Competition (ACTC). **The selected athletes can seek assistance under the Scheme for the following :**

- Customized training under reputed coaches at institutes having world-class facilities.
- Participation in international competition.
- Purchase of equipment.
- Services of support staff/personnel like Physical Trainer, Sports Psychologist, Mental Trainer and Physiotherapist etc.
- Any other support specific to the sport discipline.
- Out-of-pocket allowance of Rs. 50,000/- (Rupees fifty thousand only) a month to the athletes as an incentive

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE WEEK

Source: The Hindu & Indian Express

UNESCO celebrates the annual World Heritage Week from November 19 to 25 across countries.

Objective

The objective of the week, observed by UNESCO, is to make people aware of the rich heritage and also strive for its preservation.

Celebrations in India

- In India, various programs related to historical structures, tour places and cultural and traditional heritage of the country are initiated to celebrate the week.

- Several schools and colleges are celebrated World Heritage Week in the country by organising quiz and painting competitions.
- The Archaeological Survey of India and several other museums are organised programs highlighting the significance of ancient monuments and their preservation.
- The heritage sites celebrated the week include Qutub Minar, Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Delhi Red Fort, Delhi Darwaza, Bhadra Gate, port town of Muziris among others.

UNESCO World Heritage sites in India

- There are 38 sites in India which include 30 Cultural, 7 Natural and 1 Mixed sites
- Jaipur city(2019) and Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai (2018) are the recent sites which were added into the list

ADB, INDIA SIGN \$91 MILLION LOAN FOR COMPREHENSIVE WATER MANAGEMENT IN KARNATAKA

Source: PIB

Recently the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a \$91 million loan to modernize the Vijayanagara Channel irrigation systems and prepare river basin management plans in the Krishna river basin that will help improve irrigation water use efficiency and contribute to improving sustainable water security in Karnataka.

Significance of the project

- The investment program will help Government of Karnataka in strengthening its institutions involved in integrated water resource management and modernizing the irrigation system infrastructure for improving water use efficiency in the State
- This second project loan will continue to strengthen state and basin institutions for IWRM and finance the modernization of Vijayanagara Channels
- The investment program, consisting of two project loans, will help Karnataka's water agencies better

draw up and roll out effective river basin management plans.

- The **first project is helping the modernization of the Gondi irrigation system** and supporting the state with preparing a new water resources policy and other water governance strengthening activities.
- The project interventions are also tackling inefficient water use in agriculture that accounts for over 84% of the state's total water use. This will improve water availability to meet the rising demand from other users in the state.
- About 30 water user cooperative societies will also be established and strengthened for improving their farmer irrigation canals under the second project.

AYURVEDA MEDICINES FOR TREATING LIFESTYLE DISEASES

Source: PIB

Ministry of AYUSH in collaboration with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has implemented a project viz Integration of AYUSH (Ayurveda) with National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardio-vascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) program in the identified Districts.

Key Highlights

- For comprehensive management of lifestyle related disorders, a pilot project on 'Integration of AYUSH with NPCDCS' has been initiated in six districts(as in 2017), namely;
 1. Bhilwara (Rajasthan), Gaya (Bihar), Surendranagar (Gujarat) under Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS)
 2. Lakhimpur-Kheri (Uttar Pradesh) under Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM); and Krishna (Andhra Pradesh) and Darjeeling (West Bengal) under Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH).

- Synergy is being harnessed between the Allopathy system under NPCDCS and the alternative systems of medicine under AYUSH, for prevention and management of 'lifestyle-related' common NCDs.
- Besides health promotion and patient management services at the NCD/Lifestyle Clinics, training on Yoga are also provided through an integrated Yoga programme.
- The government is planning to expand NPCDCS-AYUSH integration project to more districts of the country.

FARMERS' CLUBS (FCS)

Source: PIB & Agritech Portal

Objective

The major objective is to promote "Development through credit, technology transfer, awareness and capacity building" of the farmers.

NABARD as Promoter

Farmers' Clubs (FCs) promoted by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) are **grass root level informal fora organized** by the rural branches of banks, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), etc.

Role and Functions of Farmers' Clubs

- **Coordinate with banks** to ensure credit flow among its members and forge better bank borrower relationship
- **Organise minimum one meeting per month** and depending upon the need, there would be 2-3 meetings per month. Non-members can also be invited to attend the meetings,
- **Interface with subject matter specialists in the various fields of agriculture and allied activities etc.**, extension personnel of Agriculture Universities, Development Departments and other related agencies for technical know how upgradation. For guest lectures, even experienced farmers who are non members from the village/ neighbouring villages could be invited,
- **Liaison with Corporate input suppliers** to purchase bulk inputs on behalf of members,
- **Organise/facilitate joint activities like value addition**, processing, collective purchase of inputs

and farm produce marketing, etc. for the benefit of members. They can also sponsor / organise SHGs,

- **Undertake socio-economic developmental activities like community works**, education, health, environment and natural resource management etc.
- **Market rural produce and products.**

Significance

- The programme is being implemented for the mutual benefit of the banks and the farmers.
- The clubs are beneficial for banks as well as line departments of the State Government for convergence of the programmes / schemes sponsored / implemented by them.

NATIONAL AYUSH MISSION(NAM)



Source: Ministry of AYUSH

The government of India launched the NAM in 2014. The basic objective of NAM is to promote AYUSH medical systems through cost-effective AYUSH services, strengthening of educational systems, facilitate the enforcement of quality control of Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani & Homoeopathy (ASU &H) drugs and sustainable availability of ASU & H raw-materials.

Objectives

1. To provide cost-effective AYUSH Services, with a universal access through upgrading AYUSH Hospitals and Dispensaries, co-location of AYUSH facilities at Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Community Health Centres (CHCs) and District Hospitals (DHs).
2. To strengthen institutional capacity at the state level through upgrading AYUSH educational institutions, State Govt. ASU&H Pharmacies, Drug Testing Laboratories, and ASU & H enforcement mechanism.
3. Support cultivation of medicinal plants by adopting Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) so as to provide a sustained supply of quality raw-materials and support certification mechanism for

quality standards, Good Agricultural/ Collection/Storage Practices.

4. Support setting up of clusters through the convergence of cultivation, warehousing, value addition and marketing and development of infrastructure for entrepreneurs.

Mission Components

Mandatory Components

- AYUSH Services
- AYUSH Educational Institutions
- Quality Control of ASU &H Drugs
- Medicinal Plants

Flexible Components

1. Out of the total State envelop available, 20% funds will be earmarked for flexible funds which can be spent on any of the items given below with the stipulation that not more than 5% of the envelop is spent on any of the components:
 - AYUSH Wellness Centres including Yoga & Naturopathy
 - Tele-medicine
 - Sports Medicine through AYUSH
 - Innovations in AYUSH including Public-Private Partnership
 - Interest subsidy component for Private AYUSH educational Institutions
 - Reimbursement of Testing charges
 - IEC activities
 - Research & Development in areas related to Medicinal Plants
 - Voluntary certification scheme: Project-based.
 - Market Promotion, Market intelligence & buyback interventions
 - Crop Insurance for Medicinal Plants
2. The financial assistance from the Government of India shall be supplementary in the form of contractual engagements, infrastructure development, Capacity Building and supply of medicines to be provided.

NATIONAL CAREER SERVICE (NCS) PROJECT

Source: Ministry of Labour & Employment

National Career Service is a Five Year **Mission Mode Project** launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2015. The project is being **implemented by the Directorate General of Employment, Ministry of Labour & Employment**. National Career Service (NCS) is a one-stop solution that provides a wide array of **employment and career-related services to the citizens of India**. It works towards bridging the gap between job seekers and employers, candidates seeking training and career guidance, agencies providing training and career counseling.

Key features

- It brings together all stakeholders like job seekers, employers, counsellors, trainers, and private placement agencies to facilitate the convergence of information and create synergies through these associations.
- The NCS project reaches out to the people of this country through its **three essential pillars i.e. a well-designed ICT based portal which is NCS portal, Countrywide set up of Model Career Centers and Interlinkage with all the states through employment exchanges**.
- **NCS Portal:** Nation-wide platform to provide a wide range of **online services including job placement, vacancy notification, information on formal training programmes, on-the-job training and much more**. The **focus areas for the National Career Service platform** are listed below:
 1. Enhancing career and employment opportunities
 2. Counselling and guidance for career development
 3. Focusing on decent employment
 4. Enhancing female labour force participation
 5. Encouraging entrepreneurial endeavours
- **Multiple Access Points of NCS:** NCS reaches out to people through its multiple delivery mechanisms to empower citizens with access to nationwide opportunities.

- **Career Centres:** Hub of career-related services primarily engaged in registration of various stakeholders, organizing events such as job fairs and providing career counselling to job-seekers.
- **Common Service Centres:** NCS services are also accessible through Common Service Centres (CSC). People can avail NCS through CSC at nominal charges and avail all its benefits.
- **Post Offices:** NCS services are also accessible through Post Offices across the country. Now, youth can easily register on the NCS Portal by visiting nearby post office of their respective locations.

SARAS MELA



Source: PIB

The Union Minister for Rural Development, Panchayati Raj inaugurated the SARAS IITF Mela 2019 at Pragati maidan, New Delhi.

About SARAS

- SARAS Mela is an initiative by the DeendayalAntyodayaYojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India with an **objective to bring the rural women SHG members formed under DAY-NRLM, in one platform to showcase their skills, sell and build linkages with potential market players**.
- The Fair **aims to eradicate middlemen between the craftsman and the local buyers** and ensures to increase the margins for the artisans.

- SARAS Fair also aims at facilitating and motivating the beneficiaries of Self Help Groups (SHGs) supported by DAYNRLM schemes of Ministry of Rural Development to exhibit and sell their products and provide them with an opportunity for additional income, exposure, and interaction on a large scale.
- SARAS Mela not only provides a platform to these SHG women, but it also provides a **national level exposure** to understand the demand and taste of the urban customers in metros.
- The SARAS IITF Mela is being organized by the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) along with DAY-NRLM, MoRD.

SARAS Mela-2019

- The SARAS-IITF Mela 2019 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi was organized by the Ministry of Rural Development from 14th to 27th November 2019.
- Many artisans from different states have showcased a wide range of curated collection of products like handicrafts, handlooms and natural food products
- SARAS-IITF 2019 displayed a large variety of handloom and handicraft items made by SHG members of DAY-NRLM, MoRD across States.
- Some of the special attractions in SARAS IITF 2019, PragatiMaidan this year were natural food items, handicrafts, and handloom.