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BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation

The space agencies of BRICS nations have been negotiating a Framework Agreement to formalize the cooperation on building a 'virtual constellation of remote sensing satellites', made up of satellites contributed by BRICS space agencies.

The five-nation group of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) plans to share crucial data under a "virtual constellation of remote sensing satellites" which is made up of satellites contributed by BRICS space agencies.

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed virtual constellation is **to get access to satellite remote sensing data, which could be used by the individual BRICS nations** for various applications including **natural resources management and disaster management**

Need for constellation

The BRICS represent 43 percent of the world's population, 30 percent of gross domestic product and 17 percent of global trade and they have been trying to enhance cooperation in different fields, including space.

What is a virtual constellation?

Defined by the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) as a "set of space and ground segment capabilities that operate in a coordinated manner to **meet a combined and common set of Earth Observation requirements**", **virtual constellations can principally be used to combine sensors with similar spatial, spectral, temporal, and radiometric characteristics.**

Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA)

(Sources: PIB & Ministry of Corporate Affairs)

Investor Education & Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) signed MOU with Bank of Baroda for Investor Awareness **About Investor Education & Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA)**

Establishment:

For administration of Investor Education and Protection Fund Government of India has on 7th September 2016 established Investor Education

and Protection Fund Authority **under the provisions of section 125 of the Companies Act, 2013.**

Responsibility of the Authority:

The Authority is entrusted with the responsibility of **administration of the Investor Education Protection Fund (IEPF)**, make refunds of shares, unclaimed dividends, matured deposits/debentures, etc. to investors and to promote awareness among investors.

Investor Education Protection Fund (IEPF) & Its Utilization

The IEPF is to be utilized for;

- The refund in respect of unclaimed dividends, matured deposits, matured debentures, the application money due for refund and interest thereon
- Promotion of investors' education, awareness, and protection
- Distribution of any disgorged amount among eligible and identifiable applicants for shares or debentures, shareholders, debenture-holders or depositors who have suffered losses due to wrong actions by any person, in accordance with the orders made by the Court which had ordered disgorgement
- Reimbursement of legal expenses incurred in pursuing class-action suits under sections 37 and 245 by members, debenture-holders or depositors as may be sanctioned by the Tribunal and
- Any other purpose incidental thereto, in accordance with such rules as may be prescribed: Provided that the person whose amounts referred to in clauses (a) to (d) of sub-section (2) of section 205C transferred to Investor Education and Protection Fund, after the expiry of the period of seven years as per provisions of the Companies Act, 1956, shall be entitled to get refund out of the Fund in respect of such claims in accordance with rules made under this section.

Exercise INDRA 2019

Exercise INDRA 2019 a joint, tri-services exercise between India and Russia was held in India from 10 — 19 December 2019 simultaneously **at Babina (near Jhansi), Pune, and Goa**

About Exercise INDRA

- The INDRA series of exercise began in 2003 and the First joint Tri-Services Exercise was conducted in 2017
- Exercise INDRA - 2019 is the second edition of Joint Tri-Services Exercise between Indian and Russian Armed Forces.
- IAF undertook service-specific and joint missions during the exercise. Russian Federation Air Force (RFAF) element participated in the exercise along with IAF counterparts.
- The broad theme for the exercise was to organize a Joint Task Force for undertaking planning and execution of air operations for eliminating terrorists at the request of the third country under the UN mandate.
- However, combined missions between IAF and RFAF also undertook for an enriching experience and maximizing training value in terms of interoperability.
- This year IAF has fielded Su-30MKI, Jaguar, MI-17 helicopters, Airborne Warning & Control System aircraft and Guards of IAF participated in the exercise.
- The Russian side was represented by Yaroslav Mudry, Viktor Konetsky, and Elyna

Significance of the exercise

Tri-Services Ex INDRA-2019 will further strengthen mutual confidence, interoperability and enable sharing of best practices between the Armed Forces of both countries. The exercise showcases the long-standing bond of India and Russia friendship.

Women Help Desks in Police Stations

Recently the Ministry of Home Affairs has sanctioned a sum Rs. 100 crores from Nirbhaya Fund for setting up/strengthening of Women Help Desks in Police Stations. **This scheme would be implemented by the States and Union Territories.**

About Women Help Desks

- Women Help Desks would focus on making the Police Stations more women-friendly and approachable, as they would be the first and single point of contact for any woman walking into a police station.

- Essentially, lady police officers would be deployed at these help desks.
- The officials of Women Help Desk would be trained to be sensitive towards women.
- These help desks would have enlisted panel of experts like lawyers, psychologists and NGOs to facilitate legal aid, counselling, shelter, rehabilitation, and training, etc.

Head on Generation Technology

Indian Railways have come up with an energy-efficient and environment-friendly innovative solution to address the issues of air & noise pollution and energy efficiency in the running of passenger trains. An improvised converter has been developed, which is fitted in Electric locomotives which can replace the diesel generators. It uses power from overhead catenary to feed auxiliaries in the coaches hauled by Electric locomotives. It saves up to 1 Million liters of diesel per train per annum.

Present status of the Rail engines

- Premium passenger trains fitted with Air-Conditioned coaches and running traditionally on the End-on-Generation (EOG) system are also contributing towards air and noise pollution.
- These trains are using 2 diesel power cars for feeding power to air-conditioning and lighting load in the passenger coaches which produce an unbearable noise of around 100dB.
- Further, these power cars guzzle on an average of 3000 liters of diesel per trip per train contributing to the pollution in the cities.

Hence It is planned to convert balance End-On-Generation (EOG) LHB rakes into the HOG system on an accelerated pace to harness the benefits of energy-efficient and environment-friendly technology.

Brief about Head on Generation system:

- Head on Generation system is an electrical power supply system where electrical power for catering hotel load of the train, which includes Train Lighting, Air conditioning, Lighting, fannage and other passenger interface

requirement working on the electrical power supply.

- This scheme is a widely used power supply system by the Railways world over.
- The power in this system is received from the locomotive. With the introduction of this scheme heavy underslung power generating, equipment gets eliminated.
- Further, it also reduces the use of Diesel sets employed in power cars at the End on Generation system.

Advantages of the HOG system

- Reduction in noise- from 100dB noise to noiseless,
- Significant reduction of CO₂ (over 2500Ton) & NO_x(over 10Ton) emissions till now,
- Reduced Diesel Consumption leading to huge savings in operational costs to the tune of over Rs.1100 crores per annum,
- Economical- EOG Power Rs 22/unit, HOG Power Rs 6/unit.

The Peripheral Expressway

The Peripheral Expressway Project comprises two expressways - Western Peripheral Expressway (WPE) and Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE) connecting NH-1 and NH-2 from the Western and Eastern sides of Delhi. The EPE and WPE constitute one combined project forming a Ring Road around Delhi with a total length of 270 km. About 183 km length passes through the State of Haryana whereas the remaining about 87 km length passes through the State of Uttar Pradesh.

What is the peripheral expressway?

The peripheral expressway — a route that goes around Delhi passing through several districts of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh — is a six-lane access-controlled expressway aimed at diverting heavy traffic passing through Delhi but bound for other parts of the country. The peripheral expressway passes through Sonipat, Jhajjar, Gurugram, Mewat, Palwal, Faridabad, Noida, Ghaziabad and Baghpat.

About the Eastern Peripheral Expressway

- It is India's first smart and green highway which connects Kundli-Ghaziabad-Palwal (135km)
- **The uniqueness of the expressway:** The Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE) is also the country's first highway to be lit by

solar power and at every 500 meters, as there are eight solar power plants on this Expressway, with a capacity of 4000 KW (4 megawatts) for lighting of the underpasses and running solar pumps for watering plants and also having arrangement for rainwater harvesting on both sides at every 500 meters and there is drip irrigation for plants all along the expressway.

- Another special feature of the Expressway is that it has a **closed tolling system in which toll will be collected only for the distance travelled and not for the entire length.**
- Toll plazas will be equipped with **Electronic Toll Collection (ETC)** system for faster toll collection and Weigh-in-Motion (WIMs) equipment has been installed at all 30 entry points of the Expressway to stop the entry of over-loaded vehicles.



- Kundli-Ghaziabad-Palwal (KGP) Expressway (Eastern Peripheral Expressway) has been constructed by NHAI to ease the traffic congestion in Delhi.

Western Peripheral Expressway (WPE)

- **It passes through Kundli-Manesar-Palwal**
- With this Delhi will now have a third ring road around it which will divert heavy traffic that passes through Delhi but is bound for other parts of the country.
- It is a partially operational route divided into three 45-km sections. The expressway intersects at the National Highway 44 at Kundli, the National Highway 10 at

Bahadurgarh, the National Highway 8 at Manesar, the National Highway 248 at Sohna and the National Highway 2 at Palwal.

Ayurveda based Anti-Diabetes Medicine by CSIR

Key highlights

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), through its constituent laboratories namely **CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal & Aromatic Plants (CSIR-CIMAP), Lucknow; and CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI), Lucknow** developed scientifically validated herbal product **NBRMAP-DB as anti-diabetic formulation** and the knowhow for the product was licensed to M/s AIMIL Pharma Ltd., Delhi who are manufacturing and **marketing it as BGR-34**, across the country.
- The formulation has shown **therapeutic efficacy for treating newly diagnosed type 2 diabetes**, as found in independent clinical trials conducted at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi.

Background

The scientists of NBRI and CIMAP joined hands in developing an effective, safe, patient-friendly solution towards the management of type 2 Diabetes mellitus. They had in-depth study of over 500 renowned ancient herbs and finally identified the 6 best herbs listed in Ayurvedic ancient texts for various ailments and indications namely Daruharidra (Berberis aristata), Giloy (Tinospora cordifolia), Vijaysar (Pterocarpus marsupium), Gudmar (Gymnema Sylvestre), Majeeth (Rubia cordifolia) and Methika (Trigonella foenum-graecum) to be combined in different fractions & quantity and processed meticulously to develop a marvelous anti-diabetic formulation.

The Central of Research in Ayurveda Sciences (CCRAS) and its activities related to Diabetes

CCRAS an **autonomous body under the Ministry of AYUSH** has been engaged in extending research-oriented Ayurveda based on **integrative health care services for the management of Madhumeha which is Diabetes Mellitus. The following are the core activities;**

- CCRAS in collaboration with Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of

Health & Family Welfare has implemented and executed a programme viz. **Integration of AYUSH (Ayurveda) component with NPCDCS**(National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular diseases & Stroke) programme in the identified districts of 3 states viz. Bhilwara (Rajasthan), Surendranagar (Gujarat) and Gaya (Bihar) to cater to health care services and to reduce the burden of NCDs including Diabetes by combining the strength of Ayurveda and Yoga.

- CCRAS had developed the **AYUSH82 formulation for diabetes** through the scientific process of drug development and commercialized through National Research Development Corporation (NRDC) for wider public utility.
- **Generation of evidences on efficacy & safety of classical Ayurveda formulation on Diabetes Mellitus.** CCRAS has done efficacy and safety on formulations viz. Nishamalki churna, Saptvinsti Gugullu, Yasad bhasm, Guduchi churna, Chandraprabha Vati, Haridra churna, and Gokshuradi Gugullu.

CCRAS has published the **documents viz. Protocol on Prevention and Management for Diabetes Mellitus** and compendium on research articles on Diabetes Mellitus which are made available in the public domain for the benefit of practitioner's, physician and researchers

SWIFT (Single Window Interface For Trade)



(Source: PIB)

Key highlights

- As part of the "Ease of Doing Business" initiatives, **the Central Board of Excise & Customs, Government of India has taken up implementation of the Single Window Project to facilitate the Trading Across Borders in India.**

- The 'India Customs Single Window' would **allow importers and exporters, the facility to lodge their clearance documents online at a single point only.**
- Required permissions, if any, from other regulatory agencies would be obtained online without the trader having to approach these agencies.
- SWIFT would **reduce interface with Governmental agencies, dwell time and the cost of doing business.**
- The objectives of SWIFT are in line with key programs of Government namely 'Make in India' and 'Digital India'
- The Customs' SWIFT enables importers/exporters to file a common electronic 'Integrated Declaration' on the Indian Customs Electronic Commerce/Electronic Data Interchange (EC/EDI) Gateway i.e. ICEGATE portal.
- The Integrated Declaration compiles the information requirements of Customs, FSSAI, Plant Quarantine, Animal Quarantine, Drug Controller, Wild Life Control Bureau, and Textile Committee.
- It replaces nine separate forms required by these 6 different agencies and Customs. With the roll-out of the Single Window, CBEC has also introduced an Integrated Risk Management facility for Partner Government Agencies (PGAs), which will ensure that consignments are not selected by agencies routinely for examination and testing, but based on the principle of risk management.

How will SWIFT help:

- It will provide a single point interface for the clearance of import goods.
- Replaces 9 separate documents with one Integrated Customs Electronic Declaration
- Facilitates trade by reducing Dwell Time & improving Ease of Doing Business
- Reduces Documentation & Cost of Clearance
- Brings 6 participating Government agencies on a single platform
- Eliminates the need for tax-payers to interact separately with these agencies.
- SWIFT will indeed go a long way in order to take the new trade facilitation initiatives of the present Government to new heights in times to come.

Mobile Aided Note Identifier (MANI)



Recently RBI Governor has launched the Mobile Aided Note Identifier (MANI), a **mobile application for aiding visually impaired persons** to identify the denomination of Indian Banknotes.

Indian banknotes contain several features which enable the visually impaired (colour blind, partially sighted and blind people) to identify them, viz., intaglio printing and tactile mark, variable banknote size, large numerals, variable colour, monochromatic hues, and patterns. Technological progress has opened up new opportunities for making Indian banknotes more accessible for the visually impaired, thereby facilitating their day to day transactions.

Key features

As announced in the Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies of June 6, 2018, the Bank has developed a mobile application, MANI, with the following features:

- **Capable of identifying the denominations of Mahatma Gandhi Series and Mahatma Gandhi (New) series banknote** by checking front or reverse side/part of the note including half folded notes at various holding angles and the broad range of light conditions (normal light/daylight/low light/ etc.).
- Ability to identify the denomination **through an audio notification in Hindi/English** and non-sonic mode such as vibration (suitable for those with vision and hearing impairment).
- After installation, the mobile application **does not require the internet and works in offline mode.**
- **Ability to navigate the mobile application** via voice controls for accessing the application features wherever the underlying device & operating system

combination supports voice-enabled controls.

- The application is free and can be downloaded from the Android Play Store and iOS App Store without any charges/payment.

This mobile application **does not authenticate a note as being either genuine or counterfeit.**

E-SANCHIT

(Source: PIB & Indian Customs Electronic Gateway)



Key highlights

- **The Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) has launched e- Sanchit (e-Storage and Computerized Handling of Indirect Tax documents) for paperless processing, uploading of supporting documents, to facilitate the trading across Borders.**
- It has already been made available to importers and exporters in the country and as a next step, CBIC is extending this facility to PGA (Participating Government Agencies).
- This will enable PGAs to provide necessary clearances, in the form of certificates, through the document upload facility to the beneficiaries (importer and exporters). Beneficiaries shall be accordingly notified of the uploaded documents.

Who can login e-SANCHIT application?

- Only those PGA users, who are registered on ICEGATE, along with a valid digital signature certificate, can upload supporting documents in this electronic format.

Changes notified to the areas regulated by the Inner Line Permit

(Source: PRS India)

Currently, certain areas in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland are notified as “Inner Line” areas under the **Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873**. In these areas, **entry and exit of persons is regulated by an Inner Line Permit.**

The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued a notification to replace these areas. The Inner Line will now include:

1. Arunachal Pradesh
2. Manipur (recently added)
3. Mizoram, and
4. Notified areas of Nagaland.

The Home Department of Nagaland has notified Dimapur under the Inner Line, in addition to the rest of the state.

Recently the Meghalaya cabinet has approved a resolution to bring the state under the Inner Line Permit (under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873) but it is yet to be approved by the Union government.

About ILP

- ILP was introduced by the British Government in the Bengal East Frontier Regulations, 1873, in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur
- Inner Line Permit (ILP) is a document similar to visa, issued by the Government of India to an Indian citizen for a limited time
- It was introduced so as to stop the outsiders from plundering the wealth in these states.
- ILP allows Indian citizens to go and live in any State protected under ILP for a specific period of time.
- Any person is entitled to renew his permit every six months if he is not a native in these states despite the fact that he/she is a long-term resident.
- It also regulates the movement to certain areas located near the international borders of India.
- It is issued by the concerned states coming under the protection of ILP.

Nagaland declared as a disturbed area under AFSPA

(Source: PRS & The Hindu)

Recently the **Ministry of Home Affairs has declared the entire state of Nagaland to be a ‘disturbed area’ under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA), for a period of six months from December 30, 2019.**

About AFSPA

- The AFSPA empowers **the governor of the state, or the central government**, to declare any part of the state as a 'disturbed area'.
- In a disturbed area, armed forces officers have certain special powers. These include the power to open fire at any individual for violating laws which prohibit: (i) the assembly of five or more persons, or (ii) the carrying of weapons.
- In other words, they have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law. If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.
- Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.

What is a disturbed area?

A disturbed area is one that is declared by notification under Section 3 of the AFSPA. An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019

(Source: PRS India)

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019 was promulgated on December 28, 2019. The Ordinance amends the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016

Proposed amendments under the ordinance are:

- **The minimum threshold for certain classes:** Under the Code, a financial creditor (either by itself or jointly with other financial creditors) may file an application before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for initiating the insolvency resolution process. **The Ordinance amends this to provide minimum**

thresholds for certain classes of financial creditors for initiating the insolvency resolution process. In case of real estate projects, if an allottee (person to whom a plot, apartment, or building has been allotted or sold) wants to initiate the resolution process, the application should be filed jointly by at least 100 allottees of the same real estate project, or 10% of the total allottees under that project, whichever is less.

- **Restriction on persons allowed to make applications:** The Code **restricts certain corporate debtors from making an application to initiate the insolvency resolution process.** These include:
 - a. Corporate debtors undergoing an insolvency resolution process
 - b. Corporate debtors who have completed the resolution process 12 months before making the application
 - c. Corporate debtors or financial creditors who have violated terms of the resolution plan, or
 - d. Corporate debtors in respect of whom a liquidation order has been passed. The Ordinance clarifies that such corporate debtors will be allowed to initiate the resolution process against other corporate debtors.

Debtor's liability for prior offences: The resolution plan under the Code may result in a change in the management or control of a corporate debtor to other persons. **The Ordinance states that in such cases, a corporate debtor will not be liable** for any offences committed before the resolution process. The liability will cease from the date the plan is approved by the NCLT.

The immunity against prior offences: The immunity against prior offences will be available if such other person (i) was not a promoter or in the management or control of the corporate debtor, or a related party of such a person, (ii) was not a person against whom investigating authorities have submitted or filed a complaint, or have reasons to believe that the person abetted or conspired to commit the offence.

Permits, licenses and registrations not to be terminated on the ground of insolvency: The Ordinance states that any existing license, permit,

registration, quota, concession, or clearance, given by the government or local authority, will not be suspended or terminated on the grounds of insolvency. **However, there should be no default in payment of current dues for the use or continuation of such grants.**

Supply of critical goods and services not to be discontinued: The Ordinance states that the resolution professional may order that the supply of certain goods and services which are critical for the corporate debtor's operations cannot be discontinued during the moratorium period. (The moratorium period refers to the time period during which the NCLT may prohibit persons from taking certain actions against the corporate debtors, such as filing of recovery suits.) This provision will not apply if the debtor has unpaid dues to the suppliers, or in certain other specified circumstances.

Note: Similar amendments are proposed in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019, which was introduced in Lok Sabha during the Winter Session 2019. The Bill has been referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Board of Management in Primary (Urban) Cooperative Banks

(Source: PRS India & Live Mint)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued guidelines on constituting a Board of Management (BoM) for Primary (Urban) Cooperative Banks (UCBs)

Need for Board of Management (BoM)

The board of directors (BoD) of a UCB performs both the executive and supervisory roles and has the responsibility to oversee the functioning of UCB as a cooperative society, as well as its functions as a bank. Since UCBs are accepting public deposits, it is imperative that a separate mechanism be put in place to protect the interests of depositors

Key highlights about BoM

- According to the guidelines, **UCBs, with deposits of ₹100 crores and more, will constitute the BoM, which will be a mandatory requirement for opening new branches.**
- The BoM will be constituted by the BoD within a period of one year from the date of the circular, and have a minimum of five members and may have as many as 12 members.

- UCBs will have to make suitable amendments to their by-laws, with the approval of the general body and registrar of cooperative societies to provide for the constitution of BoM, in addition to the BoD.
- **The proposal to create the BoM was first proposed by the expert committee on licensing of new urban cooperative banks, constituted under the chairmanship of Y.H. Malegam.** The creation of a BoM, in addition to the BoD, was aimed at addressing the issues arising out of dual-control, and to bring about an improvement in the functioning of UCBs. Subsequently, **the high-powered committee, set up by the RBI under the chairmanship of R. Gandhi, made it mandatory for UCBs to set up a BoM.**
- The BoM will report to the Board of Directors of the bank.

Composition

- The BoM will **comprise expert banking professionals.**
- The chairman of the BoM may be elected by the members from among themselves, or appointed by the BoD
- The BoM will have a minimum of five and a maximum of 12 members, with special knowledge or expertise in various fields, including accountancy, banking or law.

Functions of BoM:

- It will **exercise oversight on banking-related functions of the UCBs, assist the BoD on the formulation of policies** and any other related matter, specifically delegated to it by the board for the proper functioning of the bank.
- **The BoM will also oversee the management of funds and borrowings,** and recommend action for recovery of non-performing assets (NPAs).
- Its functions will also include **exercising oversight over the banking-related functions of UCBs and assisting the Board of Directors in policy formulation.**

The BoD will continue to be the **apex policy setting body** and constitute various committees of the board, including the BoM, to assist the board in carrying out its responsibilities.

Additional support and equity support to IIFCL

The Union Cabinet has approved additional capital infusion and equity support to India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL).

Key highlights

- The additional equity support for the financial years 2019-20 and 2020-21 would be Rs 5,300 crore and Rs 10,000 crore respectively. This support will come either from budgetary support or the issuance of recapitalization bonds.
- Further, the authorized capital of IIFCL is also proposed to be increased from Rs 6,000 crore to Rs 25,000 crore. The authorized capital is the maximum amount of shares that a company can issue as per its incorporation documents

About India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL)

- IIFCL is a wholly-owned Government of India company set up in 2006 to provide long term finance to viable infrastructure projects through the Scheme for Financing Viable Infrastructure Projects through a Special Purpose Vehicle called India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL), broadly referred to as SIFTI.
- The sectors eligible for financial assistance from IIFCL are as per the Harmonized list of Infrastructure Sub-Sectors as approved by the Government and RBI and as amended from time to time. These broadly include transportation, energy, water, sanitation, and communication, social and commercial infrastructure.
- IIFCL is a non-banking financial company that provides long-term finance to viable infrastructure projects.
- IIFCL has been registered as an NBFC-ND-IFC with RBI since September 2013.

On tap licensing of Small Finance Banks

(Source: PRS India)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released guidelines for on tap licensing of small finance banks in the country.

What is on tap licensing?

On tap licensing refers to the practice of **granting license throughout the year.**

Current process of licensing

- Currently, there is no on tap licensing window for small finance banks.
- The current process for licensing is governed by the 2014 guidelines by RBI on licensing of small finance banks in the private sector

Key highlights of the guidelines

The guidelines provide for:

- **Eligibility: Non-banking financial companies, microfinance institutions and local area banks in the private sector (which are controlled by residents) can opt for conversion into small finance banks.** They should have an experience of at-least five years in the area. Public sector entities, large industrial house or business groups, and autonomous bodies will not be eligible for licensing. Small finance banks will be given scheduled bank status (banks listed in the RBI Act, 1934 and eligible for borrowing from the RBI) immediately upon commencement of operations.
- **Scope of activities: Small finance banks may accept deposits and lend to small businesses.** They may also undertake financial services such as mutual funds, insurance products, and pension products, with the **prior approval of the RBI.**
- **Minimum capital requirements:** The minimum equity capital required for setting up a small finance bank will be **Rs 200 crore** (up from Rs 100 crore currently). Further, small finance banks should **maintain a minimum capital to risk-weighted assets ratio** (bank's total capital as a percentage of its total risk weighted assets) of **15%.**

Other requirements: Small finance banks will be required to **extend 75% of its net bank credit to sectors eligible for priority sector lending** (such as agriculture, micro and small enterprises). Further, at least 50% of loans by these banks should be kept up to 25 lakh rupees, on an ongoing basis.

Committee to review the Framework for Economic Indicators

Composition of the committee

- The Committee will comprise 28 members, including **representatives from the United Nations, Reserve Bank of India, Ministry of Finance, NITI Aayog, and economists and statisticians.**
- It will be chaired by India's first chief Statistician Pronab Sen

Key highlights

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has constituted a Standing Committee on Economic Statistics **to review the framework of economic indicators related to the industrial sector, the services sector, and labour force statistics.**
- The committee will also deliberate and develop methodologies for surveys on industry, services and employment in place of multiple panels on these issues.
- The committee has been set up at a time when the credibility and independence of India's official statistics have been doubted on various grounds, including the gross domestic product (GDP) growth numbers and methodology, employment and expenditure surveys.
- The committee will seek to bring consistency among various government economic indices.
- The new committee has been tasked with looking into datasets such as the Periodic Labour Force Survey, the Annual Survey of Industries, the Annual Survey of Services Sector Enterprises, the Annual Survey of Unorganised Sector Enterprises, Time Use Survey, Index of Service Production, Index of Industrial Production, Economic Census and other surveys or statistics brought before it.

The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019

The Minister of Electronics and Information Technology introduced the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 in the introduced in Lok Sabha

Key features of the bill

- Applicability of the bill: The Bill governs the processing of personal data by:
 - a. Government
 - b. Companies incorporated in India, and
 - c. Foreign companies dealing with personal data of individuals in India.

The Bill categorises certain personal data as sensitive personal data. This includes financial data, biometric data, caste, religious or political beliefs, or any other category of data specified by the government, in consultation with the Authority and the concerned sectoral regulator.

Data fiduciary: A data fiduciary is an entity or individual who decides the means and purpose of processing personal data. Such processing will be subject to certain purpose, collection and storage limitations. For instance, personal data can be processed only for specific, clear and lawful purpose.

Additionally, all data fiduciaries must undertake certain transparency and accountability measures such as:

- a. **Implementing security safeguards** (such as data encryption and preventing misuse of data), and
- b. **Instituting grievance redressal mechanisms** to address complaints of individuals.
- c. They must also institute mechanisms for age verification and parental consent when processing sensitive personal data of children.

Rights of the individual under the bill: The Bill sets out certain rights of the individual (or data principal). These include the right to:

- a. Obtain confirmation from the fiduciary on whether their personal data has been processed
- b. Seek correction of inaccurate, incomplete, or out-of-date personal data
- c. Have personal data transferred to any other data fiduciary in certain circumstances, and
- d. Restrict continuing disclosure of their personal data by a fiduciary, if it is no longer necessary or consent is withdrawn.

Grounds for processing personal data by fiduciaries: The Bill allows processing of data by fiduciaries **only if consent is provided by the individual**. However, in certain circumstances, personal data can be processed without consent. These include:

- a. If required by the State for providing benefits to the individual
- b. Legal proceedings
- c. To respond to a medical emergency.

Social media intermediaries: The Bill defines these to include **intermediaries which enable online interaction between users and allow for sharing of information**. All such intermediaries which have users above a notified threshold, and whose actions can impact electoral democracy or public order, have certain obligations, which include providing a voluntary user verification mechanism for users in India.

Data Protection Authority: The Bill sets up a Data Protection Authority which may:

- a. Take steps to protect the interests of individuals
- b. Prevent misuse of personal data, and
- c. Ensure compliance with the Bill.

Composition of Data Protection Authority: It will consist of **a chairperson and six members, with at least 10 years' expertise in the field of data protection** and information technology. Orders of the Authority can be appealed to an **Appellate Tribunal**. Appeals from the Tribunal will go to the Supreme Court.

Transfer of data outside India: Sensitive personal data may be transferred outside India for processing **if explicitly consented to by the individual**, and subject to certain additional conditions. However, such sensitive personal data should continue to be stored in India. Certain personal data notified as critical personal data by the government can only be processed in India.

Exemptions from the provisions of the Act: The **central government can exempt** any of its agencies from the provisions of the Act:

- d. **In the interest of security of state, public order, sovereignty and integrity of India** and friendly relations with foreign states, and
- e. For preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence (i.e. arrest without warrant) relating to the above matters.

Processing of personal data is also exempted from the provisions of the Bill for certain other purposes such as:

revention, investigation, or prosecution of any offence, or

- a. Personal, domestic, or
- b. Journalistic purposes. However, such processing must be for a specific, clear and lawful purpose, with certain security safeguards.

- **Offences under the bill:**

1. Processing or transferring personal data in violation of the Bill, punishable with a fine of Rs 15 crore or 4% of the annual turnover of the fiduciary, whichever is higher, and
2. Failure to conduct a data audit, punishable with a fine of five crore rupees or 2% of the annual turnover of the fiduciary, whichever is higher.
3. Re-identification and processing of de-identified personal data without consent is punishable with imprisonment of up to three years, or fine, or both.

Sharing of non-personal data with government:

The central government may direct data fiduciaries to provide it with any non-personal data and anonymised personal data (where it is not possible to identify data principal) for better targeting of services.

Amendments to other laws: The **Bill amends the Information Technology Act, 2000** to delete the provisions related to compensation payable by companies for failure to protect personal data.

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Amendment) Bill, 2019

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty Sixth Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed by Parliament.

Key highlights

- The Bill amends provisions related to reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- The Constitution provides for reservation of seats for SCs and STs and representation of the Anglo-Indian community by nomination, in Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies of the states.
- This has been provided for a period of 70 years since the enactment of the

Constitution and will expire on January 25, 2020.

- **The Bill seeks to extend the reservation for SCs and STs by another 10 years till January 25, 2030.**
- **The provision of seats by nomination for Anglo-Indians in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies has not been extended.**

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens

(Source: PRS India)

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha. **The Bill amends the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007**

Key features of the bill

- **Definition of children:** In the Act, the term 'children' refers to children and grandchildren, excluding minors. **The Bill adds stepchildren, adoptive children, children-in laws, and the legal guardian of minors to the definition.**
- **Definition of relatives:** Further, the Act defines a relative as the heir of a childless senior citizen, excluding minors, who possesses or would inherit his property after death. The Bill amends this to include minors represented by their legal guardians.
- **Definition of parents:** The Act defines parents to include biological, adoptive, and step parents. The Bill expands this definition to include both parent-in-laws and grandparents.
- **Other definitions:** Under the Act, maintenance includes provision of food, residence, and medical attendance. Welfare includes the provision of food, healthcare, and other amenities necessary for senior citizens. **The Bill expands the definition of:**
 - Maintenance, to include** provision of healthcare, safety, and security for parents and senior citizens to lead a life of dignity
 - Welfare, to include** provision of housing, clothing, safety, and other amenities necessary for the well-being of a senior citizen or parent.

Maintenance orders: Under the Act, state governments constitute maintenance Tribunals which may direct children and relatives to pay a monthly maintenance fee of up to Rs 10,000 to parents and senior citizens. The Bill removes the upper limit on the maintenance fee. **The Tribunals may take the following into consideration while deciding the maintenance amount:**

- The standard of living and earnings of the parent or senior citizen, and
- The earnings of the children.

The Act requires children and relatives to deposit the maintenance amount with the relevant parent or senior citizen within 30 days of being ordered to do so. The Bill reduces the number of days to 15.

Appeals: The Act provides for senior citizens or parents to appeal the decisions of the maintenance Tribunal. **The Bill allows children and relatives also to appeal decisions of the Tribunal.**

Maintenance officer: The Act provides for a maintenance officer to represent a parent during proceedings of the Tribunal. **The Bill requires maintenance officers to ensure compliance with orders on maintenance payments, and act as a liaison for parents or senior citizens.**

Establishment of care-homes: Under the Act, state governments may set up old age homes. **The Bill removes this and provides for senior citizen care homes** which may be set up by government or private organisations. These homes must be registered with a registration authority set up by the state government. The central government will prescribe minimum standards for these homes, such as food, infrastructure, and medical facilities.

Healthcare: The Act provides for certain facilities (such as separate queues, beds, and facilities for geriatric patients) for senior citizens in government hospitals. The Bill require all hospitals, including private organisations, to provide these facilities for senior citizens. Further, homecare facilities will be provided for senior citizens with disabilities.

Protection and welfare measures: **The Bill requires every police station to have at least one officer, not below the rank of Assistant Sub-Inspector, to deal with issues related to parents and senior citizens. State governments must constitute a special police unit for senior citizens in every district. The unit will be headed by a police officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.**

Offences and penalties: The Bill increases the penalty for abandonment of a senior citizen or parent from imprisonment of up to three months to imprisonment between three and six months, and fine of up to Rs 5,000, to Rs 10,000. The Bill also provides that failure to comply with the maintenance order by children or relatives may lead to imprisonment up to one month, or until the payment is made

Toll-Operate Transfer (TOT) model

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways approved certain changes in the Toll-Operate Transfer (TOT) model for monetising National Highways.

Background

- In August 2016, the Union Cabinet had authorised the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) to monetise certain public funded National Highway projects.
- **The revenue generated from this monetisation would be utilised by the central government for the future development, operation, and maintenance of highways.**

Changes approved include:

- Earlier, projects could be monetised if they are operational and have been generating toll revenues for at least two years after the commercial operations date. This threshold has been reduced to one year.
- NHAI may vary the concession period between 15 to 30 years depending upon the project features.
- The NHAI Board will approve the detailed proposal for each TOT bundle. This will include details of proposed project stretches, estimated concession value and the proposed concession period.
- NHAI may raise long term finance from banks by securitising the user fee receipts collected from the toll fee plazas as an alternate mode of asset monetisation.

Draft amendments for mandating BS-VI level emission norms

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways published draft amendments in the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.

Draft amendments

- The draft amendments provide for mandating Bharat Stage VI (BS-VI) level emission norms for quadricycles, manufactured on or after April 1, 2020.
- The Ministry has proposed amendment of Rule 115 to mandate the next level emission norms for quadricycles. Currently, quadricycles are covered under Bharat Stage IV emission norms which are in line with European Standards.
- The amendment also proposes to insert separate sub-rule 17B after the sub-rule 17A.
- Threshold limits for emission pollutants, conformity of production (CoP) frequency and sampling plan have been proposed.
- The proposed emission norms (Tail pipe emission, OBD) are in line with European norms. The emission tests for lading/acceleration. Crankcase gas emission, durability testing are as per BS VI 4W in Europe Quadricycle category

Quadricycles

A quadricycle is a four-wheeler, which is smaller and lighter than a passenger car.

About the Bharat Stage Emission Standards (BSES)

- The Bharat Stage Emission Standards (BSES) are emission standards **instituted by the central government to regulate the output of air pollutants from motor vehicles.**
- BSES provides progressive standards with more stringent norms.
- Presently, applicable emission norms for quadricycles is Bharat Stage IV.

Organisational Restructuring of Indian Railways

(Source: PRS India)

The Union Cabinet approved the organisation restructuring of Indian Railways

Key highlights

- **Merger of Various Group A services of Indian Railways:** The eight group A services of Indian Railways, such as **Indian Railways Traffic Service and Indian Railways Accounts Service**, will be merged into a single service called **Indian Railways Management Service**.
- This is in accordance with the recommendations of certain Committees constituted on railways reforms such as the **Prakash Tandon Committee (1994) and the Bibek Debroy Committee (2015)**.
- **Reorganisation of Railway Board:** The Railway Board will be reorganised on the basis of functional lines of Railways.

Composition of the Railway Board:

- It will have a **Chairman**, who will act as the **Chief Executive Officer**.
- It will have **four members** responsible for (i) infrastructure, (ii) operations & business development, (iii) rolling stock, and (iv) finance, respectively.
- **Some independent members** in advisory role will also be appointed to the board. **Currently, Railway Board consists of a Chairman and members along the departmental lines.**

Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019

(Source: PRS India)

The Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha. The proposed Bill provides for prevention of maritime piracy and prosecution of persons for such piracy related crimes

Key features of the bill are:

- **Applicability of the Bill:** The Bill will apply to all parts of the sea adjacent to and beyond the limits of the Exclusive Economic Zone of India. Exclusive Economic Zone refers to the area of sea to which India has exclusive rights for economic activities.
- **Definition of Piracy:** The Bill defines piracy as any illegal act of violence, detention, or destruction committed against a ship, aircraft, person or property, for private purposes, by the crew or passengers of a private ship or aircraft. Such acts may be carried out on

the high seas or in any place outside the jurisdiction of India. Inciting or intentionally facilitating such acts would also qualify as piracy.

- **Piracy also includes voluntary participation in the operations of a pirate ship or aircraft.** This includes a ship or aircraft which is either intended to be used for committing any act of piracy, or has been used to commit an act of piracy, and is still under the control of the persons guilty of such act.
- **Offences and penalties:**
 - a. An act of piracy will be punishable with imprisonment for life; or death, if the act of piracy includes attempted murder, or causes death.
 - b. An attempt to commit, aid, abet, or procure for an act of piracy, or directing others to participate in an act of piracy will be punishable with up to **14 years of imprisonment, and a fine.**

Designated Court: The central government, may notify certain Sessions Courts to be Designated Courts under the Bill. It may also notify the territorial jurisdiction of each Designated Court.

It will try offences committed by:

- a. A person of any nationality in the custody of the Indian Navy or Coast Guard
- b. A citizen of India, a resident foreign nationals in India, or a stateless person. Further, the Court may try a person even if they are not physically present.

The Court will not have jurisdiction over offences committed on a foreign ship, unless an intervention is requested by the country of origin of the ship, the ship owner, or any other person on the ship. Warships and government ships employed for non-commercial purposes will not be under the jurisdiction of the Court.

Presumption of guilt: The presumption of guilt will be on the accused if:

- a. The accused is in possession of arms, explosives and other equipment which were used or intended for use in committing the offence
- b. There is evidence of use of force against the ship's crew or passengers, and

- c. There is evidence of the intended use of bombs and arms against the crew, passengers or cargo of a ship.

Draft National Statistical Commission Bill, 2019

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation published the Draft National Statistical Commission Bill, 2019. **The draft Bill seeks to constitute a National Statistical Commission (NSC) as the nodal regulatory body for all principal statistical activities of the country.**

Key features of the Bill:

Constitution of National Statistical Commission:

The draft Bill sets up the National Statistical Commission (NSC). The NSC will consist of nine members. These include:

- The Chairperson
- Five full time members
- The Deputy Governor, RBI
- The Chief Statistician of India, and
- The Chief Economic Advisor, Ministry of Finance. The Chairperson and the five full time members of the NSC will be appointed by the centre. These appointments will be based on the recommendations of a Search Committee constituted by the central government.

Functions of the National Statistical Commission:

- The NSC will **advise central and state governments, courts and tribunals on matters relating to government statistics.**
- These include evolving national policies, legislative measures, and laying standards for statistical concepts and methodologies.
- It will **maintain government statistics data for public distribution.**

National Statistical Audit and Assessment Organization:

- The draft Bill establishes the National Statistical Audit and Assessment Organization within the NSC.
- This division will conduct periodic statistical audit of any statistical survey being conducted by a government agency.

- It will be **headed by the Chief Statistical Auditor**, appointed by the central government.

National Statistical Fund:

- **The draft Bill constitutes the National Statistical Fund.**
- **This fund shall include resources received by the NSC through government grants, fees and charges, and any other sources decided by the central government.**
- The fund can be used to pay salaries, allowances and other remuneration to the members, among others.

Inquiries, offences and penalties:

The NSC has the power to warn, caution or censure a government agency if: (i) it does not comply with the standards of statistical ethics, or (ii) any person engaged in government statistics commits professional misconduct, makes a false or misleading statement or material omission in any information furnished to the NSC

Creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff

The Union Cabinet has approved the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

Background

The creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff was **first recommended by the report of the Group of Ministers on 'Reforming the National Security System' (2001)** to provide single-point military advice to the government. The government expects this reform will enable the armed forces to implement coordinated defence practices and procedures

Key highlights

- The post will be in the **rank of a four-star General**. Further, a **Department of Military Affairs will be constituted under the Ministry of Defence**. This department will be headed by the CDS.
- General Bipin Rawat has been appointed as the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) with effect from December 31, 2019
- **The CDS will be the permanent chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee**. Currently, this position is held by the senior-most Chief of Staff until they retire, and therefore is not permanent.

Functions of CDS

- **Administer the tri-services organizations** (Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force) and act as the **principal military advisor to the Defence Minister** on all tri-services matters. (Note that **CDS will not exercise any military command over the three service chiefs.**)
- **Function as a military advisor to the Nuclear Command Authority** (authority responsible for command and control of India's nuclear weapons programme).
- **Bring inter-service cooperation in operations,** logistics, transport, communications of the three services.
- **Serve as a member of the defence acquisition council** and defence planning committee.

Role of the Department of Military Affairs

The Department of Military Affairs will deal with:

- Matters related to defence procurement, training and staffing for the services
- Facilitating restructuring of military commands for optimal utilization of resources, and
- Promoting the use of indigenous equipment.

Standing Committee report on the NIFTEM Bill, 2019

The Standing Committee on Agriculture **Chaired by Mr. P. C. Gaddigoudar** submitted its report on the National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019.4

About the Bill

- **The Bill declares certain institutes of food technology, entrepreneurship, and management as institutions of national importance.**
- These are the National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM), Kundli and the Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IIFPT), Thanjavur

Important observations and recommendations of the Committee

Composition of the Board of Governors:

- The Bill provides for a Board of Governors, which will be the principal executive body

of the institute. The Chairperson of the Board will be a distinguished person in the field of food science or technology, management, or public administration. **The Committee observed that since food processing is a specialized field, the Chairperson should have practical experience in the industry or academia.**

- It recommended that the **provision appointing public administrators as Chairperson of the Board should be removed.** This would help de-bureaucratize the working of the institute and adopt industry-friendly policies.
- **It also recommended the inclusion of a Member of Parliament in the Board similar to the Institutes of Technology Act, 1961.**

The maximum limit on fee for technical courses:

- The National Fee Committee under the All India Council for Technical Education fixes the maximum tuition and development fee for professional courses.
- The Committee noted that NIFTEM, Kundli is charging a higher fee for certain programmes as compared to the maximum fee recommended by the National Fee Committee.
- It recommended that the central government should form a high-level Committee to analyze the extent of the excess fee charged by the institute till date and take corrective measures.
- The fee for existing courses should be capped from the current academic session. **It also recommended the introduction of a new provision in the Bill to cap the fee for various courses in NIFTEMs at a reasonable level.**

Tuition fee waiver scheme:

- The AICTE provides for a tuition fee waiver scheme for women and economically backward classes for courses in technical institutions.
- The Committee noted that NIFTEM Kundli and IIFPT Thanjavur were not providing this fee waiver as required under AICTE Rules.

- It recommended the central government to ensure **the implementation of tuition fee waiver scheme for economically weaker sections.**

The Committee also **recommended the central government to start a full fee waiver scheme in these institutes for students belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**, and divyang students.

Draft National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) Bill

The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying released the draft National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Bill.

About National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB)

- The National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) was established in 2006 as an autonomous organization under the administrative control of the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India to enhance fish production and productivity in the country and to coordinate fishery development in an integrated and holistic manner
- The activities of NFDB are overseen by a Governing Body under the Chairmanship of the Union Agriculture Minister.
- The Governing Body and the Executive Committee consider and decide the activities of the Board and provide periodic guidance.

Key features of the bill

- Re-constitution of NFDB: The Draft Bill sets up the NFDB as a body corporate and declares it to be an institution of national importance.** Further, it seeks to transfer the assets, liabilities, and other rights and obligations of certain existing institutions to the NDFB. These institutions are: (i) the National Freshwater Fish Brood Bank, Odisha, (ii) the North Eastern Regional Centre, Guwahati, and (iii) the Moolapalem site of the NFDB. These bodies will continue as subsidiary units of the NFDB.

- Board of Directors:** The NFDB will be run by a Board of Directors. The Board will consist of:
 - The Chief Executive of the NFDB (the Chairperson of the Board)
 - The Joint Secretary, Department of Fisheries
 - Seven directors from the secretaries of the state fishery departments, and
 - Two subject experts.

Functions of the NFDB: The functions of the NDFB include:

- Planning and promoting the development of fisheries and aquaculture
 - Formulating schemes with the approval of the central government for the development of fisheries in a sustainable manner
 - Strengthening fisheries infrastructure
 - Facilitating training and skill development of stakeholders, and
 - Assisting the central government in regulatory measures.
- Finances:** The NFDB will maintain a fund that will be credited with sums received from the transfer of the existing undertakings to the NFDB, fees collected for its activities, and other sources. **The accounts of the NFDB will be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India**

India State of Forest Report, 2019



The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change released the India State of Forest Report, 2019. The report gives a forest and tree cover map for the country.

Key findings of the report are:

- The total forest cover is around 21.7% of the geographical area of the country.
- The total tree cover is around 2.9% of the geographical area.
- There has been an increase of 0.6% of forest cover, and 1.3% of tree cover compared to the previous assessment in 2017.
- Mangrove cover in the country has increased by 1.1% since the previous assessment.
- The annual removal of small timber by people living in villages around forests is nearly 7% of the average annual yield of forests in the country.
- About 21.4% of the forest cover of the country is highly-to-extremely fire-prone.

Forest cover in India(2019)

Class	Area(sq Km)	% of area
Very dense forest	99,278	3.02%
Moderately dense forest	3,08,472	9.38%
Open forest	3,04,499	9.26%
Total forest cover	7,12,249	21.67%
Tree cover	95,027	2.89%
Non-forest and scrub	24,80,193	75.44%
Total geographical area	32,87,469	100.00%

Note: Forest area covers Mangrove cover

Sources: State of Forest Report, 2019

SHAKTI Policy

Methodology for auction of short term coal linkages under the SHAKTI policy released.

Background

The Ministry of Power had constituted a **High-Level Empowered Committee** to resolve issues related to stressed thermal power assets in July

2018. The Union Cabinet approved some of the Committee's recommendations in March 2019. **One of the recommendations of the Committee was to provide short-term coal linkage to power plants that do not have power purchase agreements (PPA). This short-term linkage will be provided under the SHAKTI policy**

About SHAKTI scheme

- The SHAKTI (Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyala Transparently in India) policy was approved in May 2017 with the intent of better allocation of coal to present and future power plants.
- It aimed to phase out the present Letter of Assurance and Fuel Supply Agreement (FSA)-based regime, and instead introduce a more transparent and competitive coal allocation policy.
- The policy also offered a potential solution to the lack of coal linkages to 17 power plants with a capacity of about 15,000 MW, which were part of the 34 power plants (of about 40,000 MW) declared as stressed.
- The policy was amended in March 2019 specifically to aid stressed projects based on the recommendations of a High-Level Empowered Committee.

Key features of the methodology are:

- **Eligibility:** All power plants, except captive power plants, which have at least 50% untied capacity (generation capacity without PPAs) will be eligible to participate in the auction for short-term linkage.
- **Duration of linkage:** Coal linkages will be provided for the consumption of coal by the power plant for a period of three months.
- **Periodicity of the auction:** Auction of coal linkages will be carried out every quarter.
- An annual calendar will be published by the coal companies in this regard.
- **Methodology for bidding:** The coal company will conduct a competitive bidding process. The bid for the auction will include a premium above the notified price of coal.
- **Conditions on the use of power:** The power generated under these coal linkages will have to be sold in the day-ahead market through power exchanges, and short term through a transparent bidding process

using the Discovery of Efficient Energy Price (DEEP) portal.

- **The DEEP portal is an e bidding and e-reverse auction portal for procurement of short term supply of power by distribution companies.**

UNFCCC COP25

(Source: PIB, Down to Earth)

The UN Climate Change Conference COP 25 (2 – 13 December 2019) **took place under the Presidency of the Government of Chile and will be held with logistical support from the Government of Spain**

Agenda of the conference

- The conference **was designed to take the next crucial steps in the UN climate change process.**
- Following agreement on the **implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement at COP 24 in Poland last year, a key objective was to complete several matters with respect to the full operationalization of the Paris Climate Change Agreement.**
- The conference furthermore served to **build ambition ahead of 2020**, the year in which countries have committed to submit new and updated national climate action plans.
- Crucial climate action work was taken forward in areas including finance, the transparency of climate action, forests and agriculture, technology, capacity building, loss and damage, indigenous peoples, cities, oceans and gender.

Sessions & other events

The conference included;

- The twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25)
- The fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 15)
- The second session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 2).
- The fifty-first sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 51)

BASIC Ministerial Joint Statement at UNFCCC COP25

The Ministers(Environment) of **Brazil, South Africa, India and China group (BASIC)** met during the 25th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25) in Madrid, Spain, on 10th December 2019.

Ministers underlined that COP25 should achieve outcomes as follows:

1. To conclude the negotiations related to article 6 of the Paris Agreement.
2. To mandate a 2-year Work Programme under SBI to assess the pre-2020 progress and gaps, with a view to making the necessary arrangements to fill those gaps
3. To urge developed country Parties to fulfil their commitments on providing finance, technology development and transfer and capacity-building support to developing countries
4. To interpret and implement the provisions of the Paris Agreement in a holistic and faithful manner.

Important outcomes of CoP25

- The 25th Conference of Parties (CoP 25) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change **fell short on its primary deliverables** — rules on markets and finance for 'loss and damage'
- However, it also needed to send a strong signal to countries going into 2020. There was more success on this front.
- Countries agreed in Paris in 2015 to revisit their climate pledges by 2020. But many countries were pushing this year for a clear call for all countries to submit more ambitious climate pledges next year. This is seen as a key means of ensuring countries put a focus on improving their current pledges, as well as empowering civil society to hold them to account.
- **But countries such as China and Brazil opposed placing any obligation on countries to submit enhanced pledges next year**, arguing it should be each country's own decision.
- They instead argued the focus should be on pre-2020 action by developing countries to meet their previous pledges

FASTags for Parking Purposes

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has started a pilot project for using FASTags for parking purposes at Hyderabad Airport.

key highlights

- **Phases of the pilot project:** The pilot project has been launched in two phases,
 1. The first being a controlled pilot testing, wherein only ICICI tags would be used.
 2. The second phase of pilot shall cover all other Issuer Bank tags.
- Conceptualised as FASTag 2.0, it covers parking payments, fuel payments, etc
- After the success in Hyderabad, the project will be launched at Delhi airport. Other banks like SBI, Axis, HDFC & IDFC are also in talks with airports in Mumbai, Bangalore & few of the malls to launch FASTag 2.0.
- With the Parking use case, all the vehicles fitted with FASTags, as also those sold post December 2017, will automatically benefit as they have been already fitted with a FASTag.
- **The journey of FASTag 2.0 has many exciting use cases like Fuel Payments, Enforcement (E-challan) payments, Access Management at offices and residence.**
- **GST council has also mandated FASTag for all commercial vehicles which would be generating an E-way bill from 1st April, 2020.**
- This integration will be a big boost to GSTN as it would help in identifying the leakages with respect to non-issuance/ miss reporting of E-way bill.
- With the FASTag 2.0 there will be one tag which can be used at parking lots, tolls, movie theaters which is actually the global norm.

Draft National Food Processing Policy

(Source: PRS India)

The Ministry of Food Processing Industries released the Draft National Food Processing Policy, 2019 for public comments.

Aims

- The draft policy aims for the development of the food processing sector and addressing the critical gaps hampering its growth.
- It also aims to **increase investment in the sector by six-fold by 2035.**

Objectives

- **Reducing wastage at the farmer level to increase their incomes**
- Supporting the food processing industry to create **employment opportunities**
- Ensuring a **higher deployment of credit** in the sector
- Enhancing the availability of safer, affordable, and higher quality food products for consumer, and
- Infrastructure and skill-building to meet the demands of the sector.

Key features

- **Infrastructure development:** The draft policy seeks to incentivize the creation of supply chain infrastructure for the food processing sector. **Some of the proposed measures include:**
 - a. Identifying, developing and promoting new agriculture processing and production clusters, and
 - b. Supporting the development of logistics infrastructures such as cleaning and packing facilities.

Incentives and support measures: The draft policy proposes various incentives that can be provided for the growth of the sector. **These include:**

1. Capital investment subsidy for setting up new food processing units and technology up-gradation of existing units
2. Fiscal incentives such as lower Goods and Services Tax rates on food products and food processing machineries, and
3. Certain electrical duty and land-related concessions may also be provided.

Training and skill development: The draft policy proposes various **incentives for the promotion of employment such as;**

- Promoting employment welfare

1. Facilitating farmers to set up food processing units, and
2. Promoting food processing training cum incubation centres.
3. It also proposes starting new courses and conducting research in food technology, entrepreneurship, and management.

Draft policy for promotion of Greenfield investments in the steel sector

The Ministry of Steel has published a draft policy for the promotion of new steel plants.

Need for Greenfield steel plants

- The Ministry has estimated that an additional capacity of 25-30 million tonnes per annum of steel production will be required to meet the domestic steel consumption demand by 2024-25.
- Such capacity expansion will require setting up new plants (greenfield steel plants) with investments worth Rs 1-1.5 lakh crore.

Key challenges to be addressed by the draft policy

The draft policy attempts to address the key challenges in setting up new projects, such as:

- Availability of land
- Long term availability of iron ore at a competitive price
- Faster grant of statutory clearances, and
- Incentives for a large investment

Important features of the draft policy

Operating Models: The draft policy provides the following models for providing land and iron ore mines to the new projects:

- **Steel CPSEs driven:** Excess land available with central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) in the steel sector and supply of iron ore from mines under such CPSEs can be leveraged for this purpose.
- **State government-driven:** State governments will be responsible to identify suitable land for the project. Mines may be provided through the following options:
 - a. Direct auction of a mine
 - b. A specified mine may be reserved for a CPSE/state PSE and then long-

term linkage (for more than 15 years) to the specified mine may be provided to the project, or

- c. A specified mine may be reserved for a state government company and the project owner may be given 26% equity in the company. A joint auction will be conducted to transfer ownership of land and mines.

Role of the Ministry: Key responsibilities of the Ministry of Steel under the draft policy include:

1. Setting up a task-force for reviewing the projects and facilitating approval and infrastructural support for the projects
2. Providing a single window for environmental and forest clearance
3. Leveraging incentives under the state industrial policies and the central government schemes for these projects
4. Setting up a project monitoring cell to drive completion of a green-field project within the specified timeline, and
5. Ensuring prioritization of projects for expansion of logistics infrastructure such as railways, roads and slurry pipelines.

NAVARMS-2019

(Source: PIB)



The fourth edition of the International Seminar cum Exhibition on Naval Weapon Systems 'NAVARMS-19' with the theme "Make in India - Fight Category: Opportunities and Imperatives" was held at Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, Development Enclave, New Delhi.

Objectives of the seminar

- To identify means and ways for energizing the Indian Navy's Fight category sector.
- To seek Industry support for capital and revenue requirements.
- To leverage the potential of start-ups and incubators for Defence R&D and Product realization

- To identify any impediments to a mutually beneficial partnership between the industry and the government

Key highlights

- NAVARMS is the only international seminar and exhibition on Naval Weapon Systems conducted in the country to invite all the stakeholders in the life cycle management of Naval Weapons and provide a common platform to share their views and concerns.
- The two-day event spread over five plenary sessions has provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, create awareness and identify emerging prospects for the Indian/International defence industry in the domain of Naval Weapon Systems.
- **Sessions:**
 - a. Session I: Opportunities for Industry in Naval Weapon Systems - 2030
 - b. Session II: Needs and Concerns of the User and Industry
 - c. Session III: Naval Weapon Systems - Modern Trends and Technology in Upgrade & Upkeep
 - d. Session IV: Panel Discussion on Government Policy Initiatives to Encourage Indigenisation
 - e. Session V: Building of Indigenous Capability through Collaborative Approach between Industry, R&D organizations and Indian Navy
- **Past editions:** In the past, three editions of NAVARMS have been organized in 2007, 2010 and 2013 respectively. These have aroused much enthusiasm and active participation by the industry (both domestic and international), the Ministry of Defence (MoD), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the users

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)

Secretary for the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) stated that the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), is planning to set up a dedicated Green Window to serve the unserved segments of renewable energy

The green window

- **Green windows, like green banks, are public entities** created to work with the private sector to increase investment in

green energy and bring clean energy financing into the mainstream.

- They are innovative and new tools that have been successful in the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, and the United States
- The green window would be set up to dedicatedly support underserved clean energy markets and support scaling up of new clean energy technologies. The seed capital will be used to leverage additional sources of capital from both private domestic banks and international sources

Need for dedicated Green Window

- India is one of the top three nations leading global renewable energy growth. As of October 2019, India's installed capacity renewable capacity has already met about half of its 2022 target of 175 GW.
- India, however, needs a high amount of capital invested - of the order of ₹ 21,45,000 crore (USD 330 billion) between 2018 and 2030 - to accomplish its commitments under the Paris Agreement.
- Given the existing high exposure to conventional power, there is limited debt capacity in the financial system to fund the amount of new generation needed to meet renewables targets. A green window would lower the risk for traditional banks to finance green energy and tap into international capital to help India power its cities and rural communities.

About Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)

- IREDA is India's leading financial institution dedicated to clean energy expansion.
- Since its founding under MNRE in 1987, IREDA has financed the largest share of renewable energy projects in India.
- **The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)** is a Non-Banking Financial Institution under the administrative control of this Ministry for providing term loans for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.
- It offers a credit enhancement guarantee scheme to support the issuance of bonds by wind and solar energy project developers.

- By providing unconditional and irrevocable partial credit guarantees, IREDA aims to enhance the credit rating of bonds for renewable energy projects, thereby improving their marketability and liquidity, and attracting lower-cost and longer-term funding for project developers.
- The amount raised by credit enhanced bonds shall only serve to repay existing debt partially or fully.
- IREDA's long-term objective is to contribute to the development of a bond market for renewable energy projects in India.

National Institute of Animal Health

Establishment

Chaudhary Charan Singh National Institute of Animal Health (CCS NIAH), Baghpat was established by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, under the sub-scheme "Establishment of National Veterinary Biological Products Quality Control Center", under the Central Sector Scheme "Directorate of Animal Health" as a national facility for quality assessment of veterinary vaccines and diagnostics to be used in India

Mandate

- To act as a nodal institute to recommend licensing of veterinary vaccines in the country.
- To make available facilities for quality control of veterinary vaccines and diagnostics.
- To make available standards for veterinary biologicals and diagnostics

The strategic framework of the institute

- CCS NIAH has a committed group of scientists which endeavors to provide the best services to the stakeholders for quality control testing of veterinary biologicals following **testing protocols as per Indian Pharmacopoeia 2014 and Drugs & Cosmetic Act 1940.**
- It has a strong foundation to expertise in providing these services in a transparent and timely manner to different end-users that conform to professional ethics, integrity, and confidentiality.
- The institute also **focuses on healthy and productive livestock in the Indian**

subcontinent using standard, efficient and safe veterinary biologicals in India as per global standards.

- The institute has committed to shape itself according to the future trends by optimization of the working environment at CCSNIAH keeping in view the needs and demands of the livestock sector.

Initiatives of the India Design Council (IDC)

The India Design Council (IDC) launched the Chartered Designs of India (CDI) and the Design Education Quality Mark (DEQM) in New Delhi

About two initiatives

Design Education Quality Mark

- **The DEQM will benchmark design education programmes on predetermined standards** and will accord Design Education Quality Mark to institutions that meet the provisions of the published standard.
- The DEQ Mark will be granted to institutions which undergo the review process and meet or exceed the expectations for quality and standards as prescribed in the Quality Code.
- The Quality Mark will communicate to everyone that an institution has a guaranteed minimum level of quality and standards and has undergone a third party, neutral review process.
- The Quality Mark includes a trademark-protected logo, which could be used by the recipient institutions in all forms of internal and external communication.
- The Quality Mark will help students to choose the right design programme from a wide choice, help prospective employers understand the standing of the design institute and communicate to the society about the adherence of Quality Code by the design institute.

The Chartered Designs of India (CDI)

- CDI is envisaged **as an institution that will establish and uphold the professional standards of design practice in India.**
- The focus of CDI is the **"Professional Designer"** identified by a design qualification and or experience.

- CDI is a cohesive platform that adheres to the design practice to standards in professional design competence, ethics, and service.

Need

- India has a growing design ecosystem that has resulted in growth both in the employment of creative skills and impact in the service sector.
- Creative manufacturing and design innovation will be the key drivers in the Make in India initiative of 2020 and beyond and further strengthening the brand “designed in India”.

Quality code

The Quality Code is the means to create this guiding framework. It has been based on the UK Quality Code for Higher Education published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK (QAA).

About India Design Council

- It is an **autonomous body of the Government of India established under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It is a **national strategic body for multi-disciplinary design** and is involved in the promotion of design to make India a design enabled country.
- In 2007, India became one of the few countries to adopt a National Design Policy (NDP) and to enable the policy implementation the Government of India announced the establishment of IDC in March 2009.
- IDC is mandated to implement the NDP and is committed to work towards raising the standards of design education in India and ensure that it meets global benchmarks.
- IDC is working with other government agencies, the design community, industry, and educational institutions to promote design in business, society and public service.

Significance

These two initiatives of IDC and National Institute of design, Ahmedabad will help to address the 5 challenges of scale, quality of design, quality of education for design, raising the priority for design in industry and design for a public purpose.

MoU between ICAR AND NABARD

(Source: PIB)

With a view **to promote sustainable agriculture and climate-resilient farming systems**, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Board of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) **to facilitate the action research (the research carried out with the active participation of farmers to provide solutions for the challenges)** and up-scaling of the various technologies and innovative farmer models developed by the ICAR that includes the successful climate-resilient practices, models and integrated and hi-tech farming practices in a participatory model through adoptive research on watershed platform.

Key highlights of the MoU

- The MoU is for taking up
 - a. The site-specific transfer of technologies under sustainable agriculture
 - b. Integrated farming system
 - c. Crop intensification
 - d. Agro-forestry
 - e. Plantation and horticulture
 - f. Animal sciences,
 - g. Agri-engineering, etc., including post-harvest technologies.

Further, the ICAR through its large network will **support the training and capacity building of channel partners and NABARD Officers**.

The initiative will strengthen the competence of channel partners under the promotional and developmental programmes of NABARD technology transfer under the climate-resilient agriculture, contingency and adaptation planning.

The ICAR will also help in the impact **evaluation of the NABARD assisted projects, DPR preparation for the climate change projects, farm mechanization, Agri-Incubation Centres / FPOs, and resource conservation, etc.**

RISAT-2BR1

(Source: PIB)

Recently India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, in its fiftieth flight (PSLV-C48), successfully launched RISAT-2BR1 along with nine commercial satellites from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota

About RISAT-2BR1

- RISAT-2BR1 is a **radar imaging earth observation** satellite weighing about 628 kg.
- The satellite will provide **services in the field of Agriculture, Forestry and Disaster Management**.
- **The mission life** of RISAT-2BR1 is **5 years**.
- The nine customer satellites of Israel, Italy, Japan, and the USA were precisely injected into their designated orbits.
- These satellites were launched under a commercial arrangement with New Space India Limited (NSIL).
- PSLV-C48 is the 2nd flight of PSLV in 'QL' configuration (with 4 solid strap-on motors).

National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD)

(Source: Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs)

The scheme titled National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD) has been formulated by the merger of four 100% central sector grants-in-aid schemes of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports during the 10th Plan namely,

1. Promotion of Youth Activities & Training
2. Promotion of National Integration
3. Promotion of Adventure and Development and
4. Empowerment of Adolescents

Objectives

Short term objectives:-

- Provide the opportunity for the holistic development of youth including adolescents for the realisation of their fullest potential
- Develop leadership qualities and personality development of youth and to channelize their energy towards socio-economic development and growth of the nation
- Promote national integration, strengthen secular and eclectic outlook through creative expressions by youth
- Foster the spirit of adventure, risk-taking, teamwork, the capacity of ready and vital response to challenging situations and of endurance among youth

- Acknowledge adolescents as a distinct sub-group among youth and address their distinct needs and at the same time provide positive stimulation and congenial environment for their all-round development
- To encourage research and publication and to promote technical resource support including the development of information and database on issues concerning youth and adolescents.

Long-term objectives

- Engage and channelize the energy of youth in a positive manner for nation-building
- Develop amongst youth a sense of pride in nationally accepted values like democracy, socialism, and secularism
- Promote activities and programmes, which foster social harmony and national unity among youth
- Promote the spirit of national integration, unity in diversity, pride in Indianness among the youth of different parts of the country and to induce a sense of social harmony amongst the youth
- To motivate the youth to act as a focal point for dissemination of knowledge in the rural area and involve them in the nation-building process
- To stimulate action for development and empowerment of adolescents, particularly from the economically and socially neglected/backward sections of society
- To build and develop an environment which recognizes the specific needs and promise of the adolescents in the country and provides for adolescent-friendly services.

Scheme beneficiaries

- **Definition of youth and adolescent:** The Youth and Adolescents for the purpose of the scheme would be as defined in the extant National Youth Policy. In other words, the expression 'youth' would cover persons belonging to the age group of 15 to 29 years and 'adolescent' would cover persons in the age group of 10-19 years under the scheme.
- **Target youth and adolescents under the scheme:** The targeted beneficiaries of the programmes include members of the youth clubs affiliated to the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, National Service Scheme, State

Government Youth Organisations, Bharat Scouts & Guides or student youth in Schools, Colleges and Universities. Adolescents and Youth from other established youth organizations or NGOs may be considered provided they are the registered members of such organizations. Preference may be given to the youth with special abilities and youth belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, minorities, and weaker sections.

- **Gender budgeting:** In the selection of beneficiary women will have a distinct priority and care should be taken to include at least one-third beneficiaries from women

Programme area & Components

SL No.	Name of the Programme Area	Programme Component
a)	Youth Leadership and Personality Development	1. Youth Leadership and Personality Development Training
b)	Promotion of National Integration	1. National Integration Camp 2. Inter-State Youth Exchange Programme 3. Multi-Cultural Activities 4. National Youth Festival 5. State Youth Festival vi. National Youth Awards
c)	Promotion of Adventure	1. Promotion of adventure at a basic and intermediate level in India 2. Promotion of adventure at advance level including expeditions in India 3. Grants to Recognized Institutions 4. Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Awards

d)	Development and Empowerment of Adolescents	1. Life Skills Education 2. Counseling 3. Career Guidance 4. Residential Camps
e)	Technical and Resource Development	1. Environment Building 2. Research & Studies on youth issues 3. Documentation & Publication 4. Seminars, Conferences, Exhibitions, and Workshops on youth or adolescent issues, national integration and adventure

National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management

(Source: PIB & Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change)

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has set up the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), **Chennai to undertake studies and research in the area of Coastal Zone Management including coastal resources and environment.**

Aims and objectives of the center

- Strive for being a World Class Knowledge Institution related to coastal zones, environment, resources, and processes
- **To promote integrated and sustainable management of the coastal and marine areas in India** for the benefit and wellbeing of the traditional coastal and island communities, and
- Advise the Union and State Governments and other associated stakeholders on policy, and scientific matters related to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

Research divisions of NCSCM

- Geospatial Sciences
- Integrated Social Sciences & Economics
- Coastal environmental impact assessment
- Conservation of Coastal & Marine Resources
- Knowledge, Governance and Policy, and
- Futuristic Research and
- Integrated Island Management Unit.

Services offered

- Shoreline change assessment & coastal vulnerability assessment
- Coastal and marine environmental monitoring
- Mapping of coastal land use land cover
- Numerical modeling of near-coastal processes
- Preparation of coastal zone management plan
- Post-project monitoring for specific project sites
- The tourism carrying capacity of islands and coastal areas
- Beach carrying capacity
- Coastal Regulation Zone maps at state and local levels
- Capacity building in Integrated Coastal Zone Management
- Preparation of Conservation Management Plan
- Sale of data products
- Decision Support system for Coastal Management

National Afforestation Programme

The overall objective of the National Afforestation Programme (NAP) scheme is the **ecological restoration of degraded forests and to develop the forest resources with peoples' participation, with a focus on improvement in livelihoods of the forest-fringe communities, especially the poor.**

NAP aims to support and accelerate the on-going process of devolving forest conservation, protection, management, and development functions to the Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) at the village level, which are registered societies.

Components of the scheme

The major components of the scheme **include;**

- **Afforestation under Seven plantation models**
- Maintenance of previous years plantations and Ancillary Activities like soil and moisture conservation activities (SMC)
- Fencing, overheads, monitoring, and evaluation (M&E)
- Micro-planning
- Awareness-raising
- Entry Point Activities (EPA) etc.

Sanctioning of the afforestation area

The Scheme is demand-driven and the afforestation area is sanctioned on the basis of past performance, potential degraded forest land available for eco-restoration and availability of budget.

Fund sharing

- NAP is a centrally sponsored scheme which is implemented with the fund sharing pattern of 60: 40 percent between Centre and States wherein the sharing pattern for North-eastern and hilly States is 90:10.
- The central share of funds are released through State Government and state government transfers the funds to SFDA along with its state share which sometimes causes a delay in fund availability to SFDA for implementation of NAP causing delay in submission of mandatory documents for subsequent release of funds.

Implementation of the scheme

The scheme is implemented by three-tier institutional setup through the following agencies;

- **The State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) at the state level**
- **Forest Development Agency (FDA) at the forest division level and**
- **JFMCs at the village level.**

FSSAI's Hygiene Rating Scheme

(Source: PIB & FSSAI)



FSSAI's Hygiene Rating Scheme is a user-driven, **technology-enabled scheme applicable to food businesses supplying food directly to consumers either on or off the premises.** Food businesses are rated on the basis of food hygiene and safety conditions found at the time of inspection and are given a score between (five to one) as per their hygiene and food safety compliance. This scheme has been recently introduced for the foodservice sector such as hotels & restaurants, cafeterias, etc.

Purpose of the scheme

- Allow consumers to make an informed food choice about where to eat and inculcate the right eating habits.

- Encourage food businesses to adopt high hygiene standards and to sustain them so as to showcase the same to their consumers.

What is the Food Hygiene Rating?

- FSSAI Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is an **online, transparent scoring and rating process that aims to allow consumers to make informed choices about the places where they eat out** & through these choices, encourage businesses to improve their hygiene standards & thus reduce the incidence of food-borne illness.
- This Hygiene rating concept is new in India but has parallels in many countries across the globe. Every country has its own terminologies which explains the idea of ensuring safe and hygienic food in all catering businesses to the general public.

Food hygiene rating in other countries

Some of the well-known schemes already in place are;

- Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland
- Scores on Doors a star rating scheme in Australia, etc.

The rating system will be implemented in 2 parts:

1. **Hygiene ratings** - which will score and rate the FBO on meeting basic requirements ensuring good hygiene practices for all processes including **handling raw material, maintaining clean premises, storing food, etc.**
2. **Hygiene ratings +** (Also known as "**Responsible place to eat**") - Its compliance will enhance the FBO's scope and responsibility towards **providing safe and nutritious food to a larger community**. They will be motivated to taking care of their employees, the underprivileged and also serving the customer beyond the mandatory, by making them aware of healthy choices and giving them access to such options.

Current Mandatory Requirements

- Qualified FBOs need to have FSSAI License/Registration and follow schedule 4 requirements. This aims to provide for adequate measures that are to be adopted to ensure that food being served to the consumers is of good quality and safe to eat.

- Train all food handlers and appoint a certified Food Safety Supervisors. Access the FSS training portal "FOSTAC" to get more information.
- Must have Food Safety Display Boards prominently displayed in the premises.
- Get food samples tested periodically.

36th International Geological Congress (IGC)

India is gearing up to host the 36th International Geological Congress (IGC) in the capital during the first week of March 2020.

The theme: Geosciences: The Basic Science for a Sustainable Development.

About International Geological Congress (IGC)

- Popularly described as the Olympics of Geosciences, the IGCs are prestigious global geoscientific events held once in four years and participated by around 5000-6000 geoscientists from all across the world.
- International Geological Congress (IGC) is the prestigious **global platform for the advancement of Earth Science**.
- The first session of IGC assembled in 1878 in France with an aim to provide the global geological community with an opportunity to create an organizational framework for meeting at regular intervals.
- It envisaged a spirit of fraternal cooperation that transcends boundaries, languages and has the ability to bring together the geoscientific community across the continents and oceans.
- **Founded as a non-profit scientific and educational organization in 1878, IGC came under the aegis of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) in 1961.**
- Since then the meetings of IGC are held in collaboration and under scientific sponsorship of IUGS
- The 36th event (in India) is being funded by the Ministry of Mines (MoM) and Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) with the support of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and the National Science Academies of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Geological Survey of India is the nodal agency for organizing the event
- **It may be noted that India is the only Asian country to host the event twice. In**

1964, India had hosted it for the first time, which was the 22nd IGC

Sustainable Development Cell of Ministry of Coal

The Ministry of Coal has decided to establish a 'Sustainable Development Cell' in order to promote environmentally sustainable coal mining in the country and address environmental concerns during the decommissioning or closure of mines.

Role of Sustainable Development Cell

- The Sustainable Development cell (SDC) will advise, mentor, plan and monitor the mitigation measures taken by the coal companies for maximizing the utilization of available resources in a sustainable way, minimizing the adverse impact of mining and mitigating it for further ecosystem services and will act as nodal point at Ministry of Coal level in this matter.
- This cell will also formulate the future policy framework for the environmental mitigation measures including the Mine closure Fund.

Tasks of the Cell:

The SDC will adopt a systemic approach, starting from collection of data, analysis of data, presentation of information, planning based on information; by domain experts, adoption of best practices, consultations, innovative thinking, site-specific approaches, knowledge sharing, and dissemination and finally end with an aim to ease the lives of people and communities in general. All of the above will be done by executing the following tasks in a planned way:

1. **Land amelioration and afforestation:** In India, approximately 2,550 sq Km areas are under different coal mines and there are also plans to bring more areas under it. These land masses required both extensive and intensive amelioration measures
2. **Air quality, emission, and noise management:**
 - To advice coal companies for effective implementation of environmental mitigation measures (water sprinkling, dust suppression methods, noise barriers, etc.) related to air and noise pollution

generated due to mine activities, heavy earth moving machines (HEMMs), transport of coal, etc.

- It also works towards energy efficiency in the mining operation, noise, and emission reduction in the case of HEMMs.
- Analysis of **Environment Management Plans (EMP)** of different companies and will advise coal companies to make it more effective.

3. Mine water management:

- Collection of data regarding present quantity, quality, surface runoff, drainage of mine water, the future availability of water collected in UG or OC coal mines, etc., and to analyze it on a GIS-based platform to prepare model Coal Mine Water Management Plans (CMWMP).
- The plan will suggest ways and also have innovative planning to storage, treatment, and re-use of such water for drinking, irrigation, fisheries, tourism, industrial or any other sustainable purpose.

4. Sustainable Overburden Management:

- The cell will also check feasibility and suggest measures to reuse, recycle and rehabilitation of overburdened dumps in a sustainable manner.
- Will examine and plan out the use of overburdened material for use in different infrastructure projects, earthen bunds, etc.

5. Sustainable Mine Tourism:

- To explore and conceptualize a plan for the beautification & creation of eco-parks in the reclaimed areas and which will also include water bodies etc., for re-creation activities and tourism purposes.
- It will also explore tourism potential and plan it out in a few underground mines.

6. Planning and Monitoring:

- Analysis of **Mine Closure Plans (MCP)** of different companies and advise to make it more effective.

- To help Coal companies to finalize a timeline for the execution of different mitigation activities/projects in all mines in a phased manner.
- Will also monitor the **effective utilization of Mine Closure Fund and Environment Budgets** of Different Coal Companies.
- To formulate future guidelines for the mine closure plan, mine closure fund etc.

7. Policy, Research, Education, and Dissemination:

- Will hire experts/institutions/organizations to conduct specific studies for establishing a robust knowledge base.
- Will organize consultative meetings, workshops, field visits, exposure study tours, etc., to enrich the knowledge base, known best global and ideas for environmental mitigation planning and monitoring.
- Will conduct regular workshops and seminars for the company level officials to educate them in new methods, technologies, approaches and also global practices.

Thus the Sustainable Development Cell envisages to address the environmental mitigation measures in a systemic manner and to provide a better environment to people working and residing in the vicinity of Mines.

PARIVESH portal



PARIVESH is a Single-Window Integrated Environmental Management System, developed in pursuance of the spirit of 'Digital India' initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance.

About the portal

- PARIVESH means-Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Single-window Hub
- PARIVESH is a web-based, role-based workflow application which has been developed for online submission and monitoring of the proposals submitted by the proponents for seeking Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ Clearances from Central, State and district level authorities.
- It automates the entire tracking of proposals which includes online submission of a new proposal, editing/updating the details of proposals and displays the status of the proposals at each stage of the workflow.
- PARIVESH provide- single registration and single sign-in for all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ), unique-ID for all types of clearances required for a particular project and a single Window interface for the proponent to submit applications for getting all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forests, Wildlife and CRZ clearances).
- PARIVESH offers a framework to generate economic growth and strengthens Sustainable Development through E-Governance
- PARIVESH enables project proponents, citizens to view, track and interact with scrutiny officers, generates online clearance letters, online mailers, and alerts to state functionaries in case of delays beyond stipulated time for processing of the application

GeM Samvaad National Outreach Programme



A national outreach Programme, **GeM Samvaad**, was launched Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Chairman, GeM. The outreach programme will take place with stakeholders across the country and with local sellers in order to facilitate the on-boarding of local

sellers on the marketplace while catering to specific requirements and procurement needs of buyers.

Key highlights

- The outreach programme will take place from 19 Dec 2019 to 17 Feb 2020 and will cover all the States and UTs of the country.
- The target is to reach out to all stakeholders and learn from their experiences on their usage of the GeM portal.
- Through this outreach programme, GeM expects to make the actual users aware about the new features and functionalities of the portal and collect feedback, which is the first step towards GeM's 'Voice of Customer' initiative.
- **Government e-Marketplace (GeM) aims to enhance transparency, efficiency, and speed in public procurement.**
- GeM provides the tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation to facilitate the government users, achieve the best value for their money.
- GeM has more than 15 lakh products and around 20,000 services, more than 3 lakh registered sellers and service providers and more than 40,000 Government buyer organizations.
- State Departments and Organizations and Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) have been using GeM for their buying needs. Sellers from the States are also benefitting through access to the national Public Procurement market using the portal.
- Through GeM Samvaad the marketplace is looking forward to receiving feedback from users which shall be used for making improvements and advancements in the system.

National Broadband Mission(NBM)

The Minister for Communications launched the National Broadband Mission to fulfill all aspirations of the people and enables fast track growth of digital communication infrastructure.

Vision

The vision of the NBM is to **fast track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion and provide affordable and universal access of broadband for all.**

Objectives

Some of the objectives of the Mission which is structured with a strong emphasis on the three principles of universality, affordability, and quality are:

- **Broadband access to all villages by 2022**
- Facilitate universal and equitable access to broadband services for across the country and especially in rural and remote areas
- Laying of incremental 30 lakhs route km of **Optical Fiber Cable** and **increase in tower density** from 0.42 to 1.0 tower per thousand of the population by 2024
- Significantly improve the quality of services for mobile and internet
- Develop innovative implementation models for **Right of Way (RoW)** and to work with States/UTs for having consistent policies pertaining to expansion of digital infrastructure including for RoW approvals required for laying of OFC
- Develop a **Broadband Readiness Index (BRI)** to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure and a conducive policy ecosystem within a State/UT.
- **Creation of a digital fiber map of the Digital Communications network** and infrastructure, including Optical Fiber Cables and Towers, across the country
- Investment from stakeholders of USD 100 billion (Rs 7 Lakh Crore) including Rs 70,000 crore from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)
- Address policy and regulatory changes required to accelerate the expansion and creation of digital infrastructure and services
- Work with all stakeholders including the concerned Ministries / Departments/ Agencies, and Ministry of Finance, for enabling investments for the Mission

First SEZ to Tripura

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has notified the setting up of the **first-ever Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Tripura in December 2019.**

Key Highlights

- The SEZ is being set-up at **Paschim Jalefa, Sabroom, South Tripura District**, which is 130 km away from Agartala.
- It will be a **Sector-Specific Economic Zone for Agro-Based Food Processing**.
- The estimated investment in the project will be around 1550 Crore.
- The developer of the SEZ will be Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC) Ltd.
- The SEZ is estimated to generate 12,000 skilled jobs.
- Setting up of the SEZ in Sabroom will open up new avenues to attract private investment considering the proximity of the Chittagong Port and construction of the bridge across Feni River in South Tripura which is underway.

Benefits

- After it is set up, **100 percent Income Tax exemption will be provided** on export income for SEZ units under Section 10AA of the Income Tax Act for the first 5 years.
- **Also, 50 percent exemption will be provided for the next 5 years** and 50 percent of the ploughed back export profit for another 5 years

Industries to be set up under new SEZ

Rubber-based industries, textile and Apparel Industries, bamboo and Agri-food Processing Industries will be set-up in the SEZ.

Quality Council of India (QCI) conclave in Uttarakhand

Quality Council of India (QCI) along with PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) is organizing its 11th Regional Quality Conclave (RQC) on 20th December 2019 at, Rudrapur, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand.

Key Highlights

- **The theme of the Rudrapur RQC was** "Advance Manufacturing with Quality, Innovation & Technology Interventions."
- The objective of the Conclave was to create awareness about the significance of quality culture in businesses, deliberate on how organizations could continuously improve and innovate and share technological advancement like Industry 4.0 and predictive maintenance.

- The Conclave had sessions on Adding Value in Manufacturing and Supply Chain with Digital Transformation, Mapping Organization's Route to Quality, Upskilling for Industry 4.0
- Leadership and Engagement Strategies for Sustaining Innovation and Quality Culture.
- Experts in the fields of creating Quality culture, Advance Manufacturing, Industry 4.0 and Leadership, and Engagement Strategies have participated in the Rudrapur Conclave to lead the discussions and lay down the roadmap for the future steps to be taken for the 4.0 engineering revolution in India.

ADB's aid for energy efficiency investments in India

Key highlights

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India in December 2019 signed a \$250 million loan to Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) to expand energy efficiency investments in India that will benefit agricultural, residential and institutional consumers.
- In addition, \$46 million financing will be provided from the Clean Technology Fund (CTF), to be administered by ADB.
- ADB previously approved a \$200 million loan to EESL, a public sector energy service company, in 2016 for Demand-Side Energy Efficiency Sector Project that focused on efficient lighting and appliances.
- Accompanying the loan will be a technical assistance (TA) of \$2 million to support EESL in implementing the project, including a gender action plan, mobilizing private sector participation in energy efficiency services, identifying new business opportunities, and transferring knowledge about successful models.
- The TA will also support the identification and development of new subprojects and pilot test some technologies. The grant comes from the Clean Technology Fund, to be administered by ADB.

Clean Technology Fund (CTF)

- The Clean Technology Fund (CTF), one of two multi-donor Trust Funds within the Climate Investment Funds (CIFs), promotes

scaled-up financing for demonstration, deployment, and transfer of low-carbon technologies with significant potential for long-term greenhouse gas emissions savings.

- Channelled through the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, and World Bank Group, the CTF finances 12 country programmes and one regional programme.

Aims & objectives of CTF

The Clean Technology Fund (CTF) seeks to promote scaled-up financing for demonstration, deployment and transfer of low-carbon technologies with significant potential for long-term greenhouse gas emissions savings. It aims to:

- Provide positive incentives, through public and private sector investments, for the demonstration of low carbon development and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions
- Fund low carbon programs and projects that are embedded in national plans and strategies, scaling up development and accelerating the diffusion and transfer of clean technologies
- Realize environmental and social co-benefits, illustrating the potential for low-carbon technologies in contributing to sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals
- Support international cooperation on climate change
- Utilize skills and capabilities of the MDBs to raise and deliver new and additional resources, including official and concessional funding, at significant scale; and
- Share experiences and lessons learned in responding to climate change challenges.

Activities supported by the CTF include programmes within the:

- **Power Sector:** renewable energy and highly efficient technologies to reduce carbon intensity
- **Transport Sector:** efficiency and modal shifts; and

Energy Efficiency: buildings, industry, and agriculture

Pinaka missile system

Pinaka Missile System developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) was successfully flight-tested from the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the Odisha coast

About Pinaka Missile

- The Pinaka MK-II Rocket is modified as a missile by integrating with the Navigation, Control and Guidance System to improve the end accuracy and enhance the range. The Navigation system of the missile is also aided by the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS).
- The system has a maximum range of 40 km for Mark-I and 75 km for Mark-II
- Pinaka is a multibarrel rocket launch (MBRL) system used by the Indian Army. It was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Pinaka integrates state-of-the-art technologies for delivering superior combat performance.
- Development of Pinaka commenced in 1986 at a Pune-based DRDO facility, known as Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE). DRDO was responsible for the overall design and development.

Current launch

- The mission achieved all the objectives including enhancing the range, accuracy, and sub-system functionality. The missile was fired from the Pinaka launcher system in the deployment configuration. The flight article was tracked by a multiple range of systems viz. Telemetry, Radars, Electro-optical targeting system (EOTS), etc. which confirmed the textbook flight performance.
- The missile system has been jointly developed by various DRDO Laboratories viz.
 - a. Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE)
 - b. Research Centre Imarat (RCI)
 - c. Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL)
 - d. Proof & Experimental Establishment (PXE) and
 - e. High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL).

100 years of ASSOCHAM

Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) has completed 100 years of its existence. The industry body held an event based on the theme of 'New India Aspiring for a \$5-trillion economy

About ASSOCHAM

- **Formation Assocham:** Assocham initiated its endeavour of value creation for the Indian industry in 1920. It has more than 200 chambers and trade associations and around 4,50,000 members from all over India. The body contributed significantly by playing a catalytic role in shaping up the trade, commerce and industrial environment of the country.
- **Councils of Assocham:** Currently, the industry body has over 100 national councils covering the economic activities in India.
- **Role Assocham:** Through its heterogeneous membership, Assocham combines the entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen of owners with management skills and expertise of professionals to set itself apart as a Chamber with a difference.
- **Contributions of Assocham to the economy:** It has been a significant contributory factor in the emergence of new-age Indian corporates, characterized by a new mindset and global ambition for dominating the international business.