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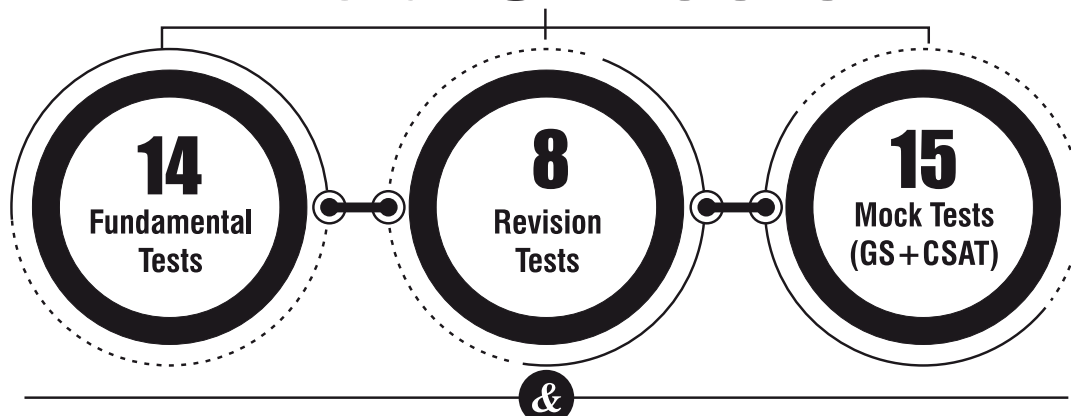
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1 EXERCISE MITRA SHAKTI -VII: 2019

- The seventh edition of Exercise MITRA SHAKTI- 2019 aimed at enhancing interoperability and operational efficiency amongst the armies of both India and Sri Lanka
- The objective of the exercise is to build and promote positive relations between armies of India and Sri Lanka through focus on sub unit level training on counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations in urban and rural environment under United Nations mandate.
- The joint training exercise also signifies the strength of India-Sri Lanka relations in the field of military cooperation and engagement, which is vital for refining the interoperability and operational preparedness.
- The joint exercise is designed for incorporating the current dynamics of United Nations peace keeping operations through practical and comprehensive discussions and tactical exercises.
- The primary focus of the joint training exercise will remain on field craft, battle drills and procedures as also the ability to operate jointly with seamless interoperability.
- As member nations of the United Nations, the participating contingents will gain immensely through joint operability and enhanced military and diplomatic association.

2 A NEW MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES PROPOSED TO BE OPENED IN PURANA QUILA BY APRIL 2020

- The Government/Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will set up another museum to house objects excavated from across India which have been lying in the Central Antiquities Collection (CAC) at Purana Quila.
- The museum will be housed in the arched cells of Purana Quila. Central Antiquity Collection Section is a centre for housing the collection of antiquities explored and excavated by Archaeological Survey of India. These antiquities date back from the Prehistoric period to post Independence era. The objective to open new museum is to display antiquities such as tools, potteries, terracotta, beads of semi-precious stones, sculptures, architectural fragments, etc. for general public, students and research scholars.
 - The museum is proposed to be opened by April 2020.
 - The estimated cost of the project is Rs.2 crore.

3 TEJAS-1 (LAH) AND TEJAS MK2 (MWF) AIRCRAFTS

- Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) is the Programme, Management Agency for design & development of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) – Tejas.
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is the design partner and production agency and manufacturing facilities have been established by HAL.
- LCA – Tejas Mk1 aircraft has attained Initial Operational Clearance (IOC) on 20th December, 2013 on completion of required performance trials and all 16 fighter aircraft against IOC order have been manufactured by HAL.
- Subsequently Final Operational Clearance (FOC) was attained by ADA on 20th February, 2019 and production activities of FOC configuration have commenced at HAL.

- Indian Air Force LCA Squadron "Flying Daggers" is operational since 1st July, 2016, with the induction of IOC aircraft.
- Tejas Mk-II preliminary design of the aircraft has been finalized. However, the same is in initial development stage. Induction & production can commence only after successful development & test flight.
- HAL Hyderabad is an Avionics Division and avionics related to HAL manufactured platforms including LCA are manufactured at this facility.

4 TIGER CORRIDORS IN COUNTRY

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India has published a document titled "Connecting Tiger Populations for Long-term Conservation", which has mapped out 32 major corridors across the country, management interventions for which are operationalised through a Tiger Conservation Plan, mandated under section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The list of macro/landscape level tiger corridors are as under:

Sl. No.	Landscape	Corridor	States/ Country
1.	Shivalik Hills & Gangetic Plains	▶ Rajaji-Corbett	Uttarakhand
		▶ Corbett-Dudhwa	Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Nepal
		▶ Dudhwa-Kishanpur-Katerniaghat	Uttar Pradesh, Nepal
2.	Central India & Eastern Ghats	▶ Ranthambhore-Kuno-Madhav	Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan
		▶ Bandhavgarh-Achanakmar	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh
		▶ Bandhavgarh-Sanjay Dubri-Guru Ghasidas	Madhya Pradesh
		▶ (iv) Guru Ghasidas-Palamau-Lawalong	Chhattisgarh & Jharkhand
		▶ Kanha-Achanakmar	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh
		▶ Kanha-Pench	Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra
		▶ Pench-Satpura-Melghat	Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra
		▶ Kanha-Navegaon Nagzira-Tadoba-Indravati	Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh

		▶ Indravati-Udanti Sitanadi-Sunabeda	Chhattisgarh, Odisha
		▶ Similipal-Satkosia	Odisha
		▶ Nagarjunasagar-Sri Venkateshwara National Park	Andhra Pradesh
3.	Western Ghats	▶ Sahyadri-Radhanagari-Goa	Maharashtra, Goa
		▶ Dandeli Anshi-Shravathi Valley	Karnataka
		▶ Kudremukh-Bhadra	Karnataka
		▶ Nagarahole-Pusphagiri-Talakavery	Karnataka
		▶ Nagarahole-Bandipur-Mudumalai-Wayanad	Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu
		▶ Nagarahole-Mudumalai-Wayanad	Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu
		▶ Parambikulam-Eranikulam-Indira Gandhi	Kerala, Tamil Nadu
		▶ Kalakad Mundanthurai-Periyar	Kerala, Tamil Nadu
4.	North East	▶ Kaziranga-Itanagar WLS	Assam, Arunachal Pradesh
		▶ Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong	Assam
		▶ Kaziranga-Nameri	Assam
		▶ Kaziranga-Orang	Assam
		▶ Kaziranga-Papum Pane	Assam
		▶ Manas-Buxa	Assam, West Bengal, Bhutan
		▶ Pakke-Nameri-Sonai Rupai-Manas	Arunachal Pradesh, Assam
		▶ Dibru Saikhowa-D'Ering-Mehaong	Assam, Arunachal Pradesh
		▶ Kamlang-Kane-Tale Valley	Arunachal Pradesh
		▶ Buxa-Jaldapara	West Bengal

- Further, a 3 pronged strategy to manage human-tiger negative interactions has been advocated as follows:-
- **Material and logistical support:** Funding support through the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger, is provided to tiger reserves for acquiring capacity in terms of infrastructure and material, to deal with tigers dispersing out of source areas. These are solicited by tiger reserves through an Annual Plan of Operation (APO) every year which stems out from an overarching Tiger

Conservation Plan (TCP), mandated under Section 38 V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Inter alia, activities such as payment of ex-gratia and compensation, periodic awareness campaigns to sensitize, guide and advise the general populace on man-animal conflict, dissemination of information through various forms of media, procurement of immobilization equipment, drugs, training and capacity building of forest staff to deal with conflict events are generally solicited.

- **Restricting habitat interventions:** Based on the carrying capacity of tigers in a tiger reserve, habitat interventions are restricted through an overarching TCP. In case tiger numbers are at carrying capacity levels, it is advised that habitat interventions should be limited so that there is no excessive spill-over of wildlife including tigers thereby minimizing man-animal conflict. Further, in buffer areas around tiger reserves, habitat interventions are restricted such that they are sub-optimal vis-à-vis the core/critical tiger habitat areas, judicious enough to facilitate dispersal to other rich habitat areas only.
 - **Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs):** The National Tiger Conservation Authority has issued following three SOPs to deal with man-animal conflict which are available in public domain:
 - To deal with emergency arising due to straying of tigers in human dominated landscapes
 - To deal with tiger depredation on livestock
 - For active management towards rehabilitation of tigers from source areas at the landscape level.
- The three SOPs inter alia include the issue of managing dispersing tigers, managing livestock kills so as to reduce conflict as well as relocating tigers from source areas to areas where density of tiger is low, so that conflict in rich source areas does not occur.
- In technical collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India, the National Tiger Conservation Authority has also published a document titled 'Eco-Friendly measures to mitigate impacts of Linear infrastructure on wildlife' to safeguard these corridors from linear infrastructure development besides sensitizing user agencies which inter alia include Indian Railway Traffic Service Probationers, National Highways Authority of India personnel, Indian Railway Engineers, besides others.
- An amount of Rs. 370 crores, Rs. 345 crores and Rs. 350 crores was allocated during the financial years 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 respectively, while an amount of Rs. 350 crores has been allocated for the current financial year under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger. Details of funds released under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger, during the last three years and the current year, State-wise, are at Annexure-I.

5

BLUE FLAG CERTIFICATION FOR BEACHES

- The Ministry has embarked upon a programme for 'Blue Flag' Certification for select beaches in the country.
- This Certification is accorded by an international agency "Foundation for Environment Education, Denmark" based on 33 stringent criteria in four major heads i.e. (i) Environmental Education and Information, (ii) Bathing Water Quality, (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services in the beaches.
- The 'Blue Flag' beach is an Eco-tourism model endeavouring to provide to the tourists/beach goers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.
- 13 pilot beaches that have been identified for the certification, in consultation with concerned coastal States/UTs, are Ghoghala Beach (Diu), Shivrajpur beach (Gujarat), Bhogave (Maharashtra), Padubidri and Kasarkod (Karnagaka), Kappad beach (Kerala), Kovalam beach (Tamil Nadu), Eden beach (Puducherry), Rushikonda beach (Andhra Pradesh), Miramar beach (Goa), Golden beach (Odisha), Radhanagar beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) and Bangaram beach (Lakshadweep).

- Rushikonda beach in Andhra Pradesh also features in the list of 13 pilot beaches, for development of facilities and infrastructure accordingly.

6 PROMOTION TO MANUFACTURING OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- Since inception of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) in 2015, about 2.8 lakh vehicles have been supported by way of extending demand incentives of about Rs. 359 Crore [Approx.]. As pilot project, 425 e-buses were also supported to various cities/ states to promote public transportation.
- Government approved Phase-I of FAME India Scheme in March, 2015 for a period of 2 years from 1st April 2015 to promote adoption of electrical vehicles with an aim to reduce dependency on fossil fuel and to address issues of vehicular emissions. The Phase-I of the Scheme was extended from time to time and the last extension was allowed till 31st March 2019.
- Based on outcome and experience gained during the Phase-I of FAME India Scheme and after having consultations with all stakeholders including industry and industry associations, the Government notified Phase-II of FAME India Scheme on 8th March 2019, which is for a period of three years commencing from 1st April 2019 with a total budgetary support of Rs. 10,000 crore.
- This phase will mainly focus on supporting electrification of public & shared transportation, and aims to support through incentives about 7000 e-buses, 5 lakh e-3 wheelers (e-3W), 55000 e-4 wheelers (e-4W) passenger cars and 10 lakh e-2 wheelers. In addition, creation of charging infrastructure will be also supported to address range anxiety among users of electric vehicles.
- Under Phase-II of FAME-India Scheme, incentives is being provided to the consumers on purchase of electric vehicles, used for public transport or those registered for commercial purposes in e-3W, e-4W (including Strong Hybrid) segment however, privately owned registered e-2W are also be covered under the scheme.
- The demand incentive to these electrical vehicles is linked to battery capacity i.e. Rs. 10,000/KWH subject to capping of 20% cost of these vehicles. Demand incentive is restricted to vehicles with prices less than the threshold value which is Rs 1.5 Lakh for e-2W, 5 lakh for e-3W and 15 Lakh for e-4W.
- This information was given by the Minister of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises, Prakash

7 STEPS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN OF WEAKER SECTION AND DISADVANTAGED GROUP IN THE COUNTRY

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, entitles every child of age 6 to 14 years to a right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education. Section 8(c) of the RTE Act, 2009 provides that the appropriate government would ensure that the child belonging to weaker section and the child belonging to disadvantaged group are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing elementary education on any grounds.
- Further, Section 12 (1) (c) of RTE Act, 2009 provides that all specified category schools and unaided schools shall admit at least 25% children belonging to weaker section and disadvantaged group in the neighbourhood in class I and provide free and compulsory elementary education till its completion.

- Samagra Shiksha, an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class XII, aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.
- It envisages the 'school' as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels. Bridging gender and social category gaps at all levels of school education is one of the major objectives of the scheme.
- The scheme reaches out to girls, Children with Special Needs (CwSN) and children belonging to Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), minority communities and transgender. The focus of major interventions under the Scheme includes provision of RTE
- Entitlements such as free uniforms, text books, special training of Out of School children etc., provision for Inclusive Education of Children with Special Needs (CwSN) and Vocational Education among others.
- The scheme also gives attention to urban deprived children, children affected by periodic migration, including children of farmers and labourers and children living in remote and scattered habitations.
- Under the scheme, provision has been made for giving preference to Special Focus Districts (SFDs), Educationally Backward Blocks (EEBs), LWE affected districts, and aspirational districts while planning interventions like setting up/ upgradation of schools upto senior secondary level, strengthening of existing infrastructure, upgradation and running of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), residential schools and hostels, etc.
- The Navodaya Vidyalaya Scheme provides for opening of one JNV in each district of the country to bring out the best of rural talent. Its significance lies in the selection of talented rural children as the target group and the aim to provide them quality education comparable to the best in a residential school system.

8**DUAL TRAINING SYSTEM (DST)**

- The scheme of Dual System of Training has had a significant impact on the skilling ecosystem after it was recently revamped.
- Since the launch of revised guidelines of DST Scheme, by Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE); there has been a huge jump from the earlier 136 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in the last three years, to now 748 MoUs signed with the organizations in the last six months.
- The revised scheme guidelines are effective from 2019 session, & applicable to all affiliated Government and Private Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) implementing Craftsman Training Scheme in the country. National Skill Training Institutes (NSTI) under DGT, MSDE, are also eligible to implement DST under Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS).
- The scheme was introduced in 2016 with the objective of enabling industries and establishments to partner with the Government and Private ITIs for conducting training programmes towards fulfilling skilled manpower requirements.
- The DST combines theoretical training from ITIs and practical training from Industry Partners thereby strengthening industry linkages and providing hand-on experience to students on industries latest technologies and techniques.
- The revised DST Scheme meets the industry's skilled workforce requirements with greater adaptability towards industry expectations and wider coverage of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). After the successful completion of training, trainees are awarded National Trade Certificate (NTC) that gives them an edge with regard to employability.

- The significant changes in the now introduced revamped DST scheme include:
 - Both Govt & Private ITI Principals are empowered to sign MoUs with industry without interference of DGT or States.
 - The eligibility criteria for industry participation has been eased for both engineering trades and non-engineering trade,
 - The minimum turnover requirement of industry has been brought down.
 - The duration of the practical training of the course has also been made flexible and adaptive to the industry schedule.
 - All the 138 courses under Craftsman Training Scheme have been brought under the ambit of DST, as against only 17 courses earlier.

9

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA TO IMPLEMENT "POLITICAL PARTIES REGISTRATION TRACKING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM" (PPRTMS)

- The Election Commission of India has reviewed the system and process of registration of political parties. The new guidelines will be effective from 1st January, 2020.
- Accordingly the "Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System" (PPRTMS) will be implemented through an online portal, to facilitate tracking of status of application by applicants.
- The salient feature in the Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System is that the applicant (who is applying for party registration from 1st January, 2020 onwards) will be able to track the progress of his / her application and will get status update through SMS and email. The applicant is required to provide contact mobile number and email address of the party / applicant in his application if he/she wishes to track the progress of the application.
- The new guidelines have been hosted on the Commission's website <https://eci.gov.in>.
- The Registration of Political Parties is governed by the provisions of section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- A party seeking registration under the said section with the Commission has to submit an application to the Commission within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation in prescribed format with basic particulars about the party such as name, address, membership details of various units, names of office bearers, etc, as required under sub-section (4) of the said section, and such other particulars that the Commission has specified under sub-section (6) of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, as mentioned in the Guidelines for registration.

10

ASSISTANCE TO FEMALE FARMERS

- The Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development is implementing Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) to empower women in agriculture by making systematic investments to enhance their participation and productivity, as also to create and sustain their agriculture-based livelihoods.
- Under MKSP, a total number of 36.06 lakh Mahila Kisans have been benefitted through 84 projects in 24 States/UTs in the country, out of which 1.81 lakhs women have been benefitted in the State of Maharashtra. A total Central allocation of Rs.847.48 crore has been made towards implementation of the approved projects, out of which an amount of Rs. 52.15 crore has been allocated for projects in Maharashtra State.

- The Department of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers Welfare is also providing additional support and assistance to female farmers, over and above the male farmers under various Schemes namely Agri-Clinic & Agri-Business Centre (ACABC), Integrated Schemes of Agricultural Marketing (ISAM), Sub-Mission of Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) and National Food Security Mission (NFSM).
- Besides, female farmers can also avail the benefits under all the schemes implemented by the Department as per eligibility.

11**AADHAAR ENABLED FERTILIZER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

- During the year 2016-17, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system of fertilizer subsidy was introduced on pilot basis in 19 districts. Further, DBT system was rolled out in a phase wise manner across all States and Union Territories from September 2017 to March 2018.
- Under the fertilizer DBT system, 100% subsidy on various fertilizer grades is released to the fertilizer companies, on the basis of actual sales made by the retailers to the beneficiaries. Sale of all subsidised fertilizers to farmers/buyers is made through Point of Sale (PoS) devices installed at each retailer shop and the beneficiaries are identified through Aadhaar Card, KCC, Voter Identity Card etc.
- Under Aadhaar enabled Fertilizers Distribution System (AeFDS), it is mandatory for the retailers to sell subsidized fertilizers through PoS devices. The Fertilizer sales are monitored online through web based Integrated Fertilizer Management System (iFMS). A study conducted by NITI Aayog through M/s Microsave revealed that AeFDS has increased accountability of stakeholders including fertilizer manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers.
- The NITI Aayog study in the pilot districts revealed that diversion of fertilizers has reduced. However, the extent of diversion of fertilizers for non-agriculture activities has not been quantified.
- To address the peak season demand, the Agriculture Departments in all States/Union Territories have been advised to identify retail points where large rush of farmers is expected during peak season. State Governments have been advised to operationalize multiple sale counters with multiple PoS devices at such retail outlets so that large rush at such points can be dealt with in a smooth manner without causing any inconvenience to the farmers and retailers.
- This information was given in a written reply by the Union Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Shri. D.V.Sadananda Gowda in Lok Sabha today.

12**TRANSPORT OF FERTILIZER**

- Department of Fertilizers (DoF) has developed an IT enabled system viz., Integrated Fertilizer Management System (iFMS), which captures end to end details of Fertilizer in terms of Production, Movement, availability, requirement, Sale, Subsidy Bill Generation to Subsidy payment to fertilizer companies. The iFMS system can be accessed at <http://mfms.nic.in/>. Concerned stakeholders like DoF, State Agriculture Departments, District Collectors, Fertilizer Companies are all provided with separate credentials for operating and monitoring purposes. Few features of iFMS portal are as below:
 - Real time, online tracking of fertilizer movement, along the plant/port-rake point-district-wholesaler-retailer chain.
 - Real time Fertilizer availability data at state, district, wholesaler & retailer level.
 - Real time tracking of sale of fertilizers at subsidized rates to farmers through PoS devices.
 - A complete end to end transaction visibility of fertilizers starting from import/ production till sales to farmers.

- Department has also developed a dashboard which can be accessed at <https://urvarak.nic.in>. The dashboard is developed to facilitate easy monitoring by various Stake holders viz. State Agriculture Departments, District Collectors and State Marketing Federations. The Dashboards provide various reports viz.,
 - Top 20 buyers (State wise, District wise)
 - Frequent buyers (State wise, District wise)
 - the retailers not selling fertilizer through PoS devices
 - Stock as on Today
 - Stock Availability: at port, plant, in states, product and period-wise (month, year etc.)
- The State Governments are also monitoring the availability and supply of fertilizers through iFMS and e-Urvarak Dashboard portals.

13

MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION LAUNCHES ROUND 4 OF RCS-UDAN

- Following the three successful rounds of bidding, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched the 4th round of Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)- UdeDeshKaAamNagrik(UDAN) to further enhance the connectivity to remote and regional areas of the country. Focus of this round would be the priority areas like NER, Hilly States, J&K, Ladakh and Islands. Some of the key features of the Scheme are:
 - Revision of (Viability Gap Funding) VGF cap – The provision of VGF for Category 2 / 3 aircraft (more than 20 seater) has been enhanced for operation of RCS flights in Priority Area(s) (Union Territories [UT] of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir; the States of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, North Eastern State; UT of Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar). The VGF cap applicable for various stage lengths for operation through category 1 / 1 A aircraft (below 20 seater) has also been revised to further incentivize the operation of small aircraft under the Scheme.
 - Promoting short-haul routes – The provision of VGF would be restricted for routes with stage length up to 600 kms, for operation of Category 2 / 3 aircraft, beyond it no monetary support would be provided. The table for provision of VGF for various stage lengths would be available for stage length up to 500 kms.
 - Well defined Prioritization framework – Airports that has already been developed by AAI would be given higher priority for award of VGF under the Scheme, followed by airports not part of the above list but located Priority Area(s) would be given a priority, followed by airports located in areas other than Priority Area(s).
 - Flexibility to change the frequency of flight operation - The Selected Airline Operator (SAO) would be allowed to change the frequency of flight operation, during the tenure of flight operation of the given route, provided that the total scheduled flight operation submitted as part of the Technical Proposal, is conformed and adhered to within a period of one year.
 - Inclusion of helicopter and sea plane operation under NSOP license – The operation of helicopter and sea plane would be allowed under this round.
 - Efforts are made to develop the airports and operationalize the pending routes. Many of these routes will be operationalized during the winter schedule 2019.
 - MoCA aims to operationalize 1000 routes and more than 100 airports in the next five years. This would be achieved by focusing on operationalizing routes in Priority Areas. AAI would focus on developing no-frills airport in the future and routes connecting such airports would be prioritized for award of VGF. The market would be incentivized to develop short haul routes only, providing connectivity to nearby airports.

14

COMMERCE & INDUSTRY MINISTER TO INAUGURATE NATIONAL PUBLIC PROCUREMENT CONCLAVE

- The 3rd edition of National Public Procurement Conclave (NPPC) was organised by Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in association with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on 5-6 December 2019 in New Delhi. The conclave was inaugurated by Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Railways, Piyush Goyal.
- It will provide an opportunity for industry, academia and Government organizations to interact and also serve as a platform for sellers on GeM to showcase their products and services.
- The key features of the conclave are panel discussions on role of MSMEs, Startups and women in public procurement. A special session on services on GeM - hospitality, travel and accommodation bookings is also scheduled during the two-day event. A Live GeM "clinic" to resolve queries on the spot and facilitate Registration of Buyer and Sellers on GeM will be set up at the Conclave. Award and recognition to the top buyers and sellers on GeM will be announced during the Conclave.
- Exhibitions of various products and services that are available on the GeM platform will be showcased during the Conclave on 5th-6th December.
- GeM is a complete online marketplace that allows all sellers to register themselves and transact on the platform. All verifications are done through online integration. GeM promotes inclusiveness and ease of doing business with the Government. It is a transparent online marketplace that not only speeds up public procurement but also ensures substantial savings for the Government.

15

DELHI POSTAL CIRCLE OBSERVES SWACHHTA PAKHWADA

- The Delhi Postal Circle has observed the year-long cleanliness drive, "Swachhta Pakhwada", as part of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan of the Government of India from November 16, 2019 to November 30, 2019. All Postal Units, Post Offices and Mail Offices under Delhi Circle have undertaken this drive with commitment. The whole campaign was led by the Chief Postmaster General of Delhi Circle, Smt. Aindri Anurag and the Postmaster General (Operations), Shri Akhilesh Kumar Pandey and the DPS (O&HQ), Shri Dushyant Mudgal have closely monitored the activities on a day-to-day basis for accomplishing the objective of this Swachhta Pakhwada.
- The Pakhwada campaign commenced on November 10, 2019 by displaying "National Post Day" banner on main gate of Postal Offices and organising a debate competition on subject relate to "India Post". As per the directive of Government of India for creating awareness among the public about the Swachhta Abhiyan and preserving of water, all units of Delhi Postal Circle organized various programmes in Post office, Mail Office, Staff quarters, surrounding areas such as:
 - Painting of Letter Boxes
 - Cleanliness of Post Offices, Mail Offices and postal colonies
 - Shramdaan by staff members
 - Tree plantation
 - Weeding out of old records
 - Organizing essay competition on Swachh Bharat Mission etc.
 - Awareness about "Discourage the use of Plastic Carry Bags".
- During this campaign, 1639 postal staff took active participation in Shramdaan and weeded out 7995 kg of old records. The Postmen in the Delhi Circle worked as Swachhta Doot for spreading awareness about Swachhta in their delivery beats.

- The Delhi Postal Circle is committed to make this Swachhta Mission a big success and hope to achieve a new milestone in coming days.

16

COMPANY LAW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS DECRIMINALIZATION OF COMPOUNDABLE OFFENCES UNDER COMPANIES ACT

- The Company Law Committee, constituted by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), has submitted the first phase report to the Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, proposing amendments in the Companies Act, 2013 for further decriminalising the offences under the said Act and to facilitate ease of doing business and ease of living.
- This was stated by Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, Minister of State for Finance & Corporate Affairs, in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today.
- The Company Law Committee was constituted for examining and making recommendations to the Government on various provisions and issues pertaining to implementation of the Companies Act, 2013 and the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 and other related matters.
- The MCA has undertaken several reforms towards easing the business environment in the country by providing Ease of Doing Business to law abiding corporates, fostering improved corporate compliance for stakeholders at large and also to address emerging issues having impact on the working of corporates in the country.
- The main recommendations of the Committee with regard to decriminalization of compoundable offences are as under:-
- Re-categorising 23 offences out of the 66 remaining compoundable offences under the Act, to be dealt with in the in-house adjudication framework wherein these defaults would be subject to a penalty levied by an adjudicating officer.
- Omitting, altogether, 7 compoundable offences; limiting punishment for 11 compoundable offences to only fine by removing provision for imprisonment and recommending that 5 offences be dealt under alternative frameworks;
- Reducing the quantum of penalties in respect of certain provisions, which were shifted to the in-house adjudication framework through the recently passed Companies (Amendment) Act, 2019;
- Retention of status-quo in case of the non-compoundable offences.

17

OPENING CEREMONY INDIA-NEPAL JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE SURYA KIRAN – XIV

- The 14th edition of bilateral annual military exercise SURYA KIRAN-XIV between Indian and Nepal Army commenced today at Nepal Army Battle School (NABS), Salijhandi, Rupendehi district of Nepal. The 13th edition of the joint military exercise was held at Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand in June last year.
- The aim of this exercise is to conduct a battalion level combined training between Indian Army and Nepal Army with a scope to enhance interoperability at military level in jungle warfare, counter terrorist operations in mountainous terrain, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief operations, medical and environmental conservation including aviation aspects.
- As part of the exercise, important lectures, demonstrations and drills related to counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations in jungle and mountainous terrain will be conducted. Both the Armies will also share their valuable experiences in countering such situations and also refine drills and procedures for joint operations wherever the need arises.

18 RATNA STATUS TO CPSES

The criteria laid down by the Government for grant of Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna status to Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) is given below:

Criteria for grant of Maharatna status to CPSEs

- The CPSEs meeting the following criteria are eligible to be considered for grant of Maharatna status.
 - Having Navratna status
 - Listed on Indian stock exchange with minimum prescribed public shareholding under SEBI regulations
 - An average annual turnover of more than Rs. 25,000 crore during the last 3 years
 - An average annual net worth of more than Rs. 15,000 crore during the last 3 years
 - An average annual net profit after tax of more than Rs. 5,000 crore during the last 3 years
 - Should have significant global presence/international operations.

Criteria for grant of Navratna status to CPSEs

- The CPSEs which are Miniratna I, Schedule 'A' and have obtained 'excellent' or 'very good' MOU rating in three of the last five years and having composite score of 60 or above in following six selected performance indicators are eligible to be considered for grant of Navratna status.

(Maximum Weight)

	100
1. Net Profit to Net worth	25
2. Manpower Cost to total Cost of Production or Cost of Services	15
3. PBDIT to Capital employed	15
4. PBIT to Turnover	15
5. Earning Per Share	10
6. Inter Sectoral Performance	20

Criteria for grant of Miniratna status to CPSEs

- **Miniratna Category-I status:** - The CPSEs which have made profit in the last three years continuously, pre-tax profit is Rs.30 crores or more in at least one of the three years and have a positive net worth are eligible to be considered for grant of Miniratna-I status.
- **Miniratna Category-II status:** - The CPSEs which have made profit for the last three years continuously and have a positive net worth are eligible to be considered for grant of Miniratna-II status.
 - Miniratna CPSEs should have not defaulted in the repayment of loans/interest payment on any loans due to the Government.
 - Miniratna CPSEs shall not depend upon budgetary support or Government guarantees.
- There is one Navratna CPSE, viz. NLC (India) Limited and two Miniratna CPSEs, viz. Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited and Kamarajar Port Limited having registered office in Tamil Nadu.
- Presently, there is no proposal with Department of Public Enterprises for grant of Maharatna or

Navratna status to any CPSE having registered office in Tamil Nadu. As per extant guidelines, the administrative Ministry/Department of the concerned CPSE is competent to decide to confer Miniratna status keeping in view the laid down eligibility criteria. The list of existing 10 Maharatna, 14 Navratna and 73 Miniratna CPSEs is as under:

Maharatna CPSEs

- Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited
- Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited
- Coal India Limited
- GAIL (India) Limited
- Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited
- Indian Oil Corporation Limited
- NTPC Limited
- Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Limited
- Power Grid Corporation of India Limited
- Steel Authority of India Limited

Navratna CPSEs

- Bharat Electronics Limited
- Container Corporation of India Limited
- Engineers India Limited
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
- Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited
- National Aluminium Company Limited
- NBCC (India) Limited
- NMDC Limited
- NLC India Limited
- Oil India Limited
- Power Finance Corporation Limited
- Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited
- Rural Electrification Corporation Limited
- Shipping Corporation of India Limited

Miniratna Category - I CPSEs

- Airports Authority of India
- Antrix Corporation Limited
- Balmer Lawrie & Co. Limited
- Bharat Coking Coal Limited
- Bharat Dynamics Limited
- BEML Limited
- Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited
- Bridge & Roof Company (India) Limited

- Central Warehousing Corporation
- Central Coalfields Limited
- Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Limited
- Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited
- Cochin Shipyard Limited
- EdCIL (India) Limited
- Kamarajar Port Limited
- Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited
- Goa Shipyard Limited
- Hindustan Copper Limited
- HLL Lifecare Limited
- Hindustan Newsprint Limited
- Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited
- Housing & Urban Development Corporation Limited
- HSCC (India) Limited
- India Tourism Development Corporation Limited
- Indian Rare Earths Limited
- Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation Limited
- Indian Railway Finance Corporation Limited
- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited
- India Trade Promotion Organization
- IRCON International Limited
- KIOCL Limited
- Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Limited
- Mahanadi Coalfields Limited
- MOIL Limited
- Mangalore Refinery & Petrochemical Limited
- Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited
- Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited
- MMTC Limited
- MSTC Limited
- National Fertilizers Limited
- National Projects Construction Corporation Limited
- National Small Industries Corporation Limited
- National Seeds Corporation
- NHPC Limited
- Northern Coalfields Limited
- North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited
- Numaligarh Refinery Limited
- ONGC Videsh Limited

- Pawan Hans Helicopters Limited
- Projects & Development India Limited
- Railtel Corporation of India Limited
- Rail Vikas Nigam Limited
- Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Limited
- RITES Limited
- SJVN Limited
- Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited
- South Eastern Coalfields Limited
- Telecommunications Consultants India Limited
- THDC India Limited
- Western Coalfields Limited
- WAPCOS Limited

Miniratna Category-II CPSEs

- Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India
- Bharat Pumps & Compressors Limited
- Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited
- Central Railside Warehouse Company Limited
- Engineering Projects (India) Limited
- FCI Aravali Gypsum & Minerals India Limited
- Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited
- HMT (International) Limited
- Indian Medicines & Pharmaceuticals Corporation Limited
- MECON Limited
- National Film Development Corporation Limited
- Rajasthan Electronics & Instruments Limited

19

NATIONAL POLICY TO TACKLE DRUG ABUSE

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated and is implementing a National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) for 2018-2025.
- The Plan aims at reduction of adverse consequences of drug abuse through a multi-pronged strategy. The activities under the NAPDDR, inter-alia, include awareness generation programmes in schools/colleges/Universities, workshops/seminars/ with parents, community based peer led interactions intervention programmes for vulnerable adolescent and youth in the community, provisioning of treatment facilities and capacity building of service providers.
- The Ministry also implements a "Central Sector Scheme of Assistance for Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drug) Abuse" under which financial assistance is provided to eligible Non-Governmental Organizations based on the recommendations of State Governments/UT Administrations for running Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for Addicts to provide composite/integrated services for the rehabilitation of addicts including adolescents.

- Cabinet approves launch of Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund
- Soon, Bond ETFs will be another investment vehicle available to retail investors providing access to bonds of state-run enterprises.
- Bond ETFs are similar to how equity ETFs invest in line with indices covering specific baskets like the Nifty50, Nifty Next 50 and Nifty Quality 30, among others
- While bond ETFs are not new in India, they have not been very popular. At present, only three GSec ETFs are available, all with miniscule assets and poor trading volumes.
- The entry of newer bond ETFs comes at a time when traditional bond funds are only just emerging from a painful period of multiple credit defaults. Investors are wary.
- Bond ETFs claim to be different from traditional bond funds by offering high liquidity, transparency and lower costs.
- The cost angle is the most distinguishing facet of bond ETFs. Being passively managed products, these charge a much lower fee than actively managed bond funds. Sometimes even less than 0.5%.
- In the debt segment, there is not much the fund manager can do to enhance returns. Any strategy that can optimise costs is the need of the hour.
- Globally, Bond ETFs have reported a healthy growth over the last decade. The size of Global Bond ETFs now accounts for over \$1 trillion assets under management (AUM) out of total \$4 trillion AUM across various ETFs.

Key objectives of launching Bond ETF

- To suffice borrowing needs of CPSEs
- To increase retail participation
- To deepen the bond market and increase liquidity

What are ETFs?

- An exchange-traded fund (ETF) is a marketable security, meaning it has an associated price that allows it to be easily bought and sold.
- ETFs are in many ways similar to mutual funds; however, they are listed on exchanges and ETF shares trade throughout the day just like ordinary stock.
- ETFs offer low expense ratios and fewer broker commissions than buying the stocks individually.
- ETFs can contain all types of investments including stocks, commodities, or bonds; some offer domestic holdings only, while others are international.

What are Bond ETFs?

- Bond ETFs are a type of ETF that exclusively invests in bonds. Bond ETFs invest in various fixed-income securities such as corporate bonds, treasuries, municipal, international, high-yield, etc.
- Bond ETFs are passively managed and trade, much like stock ETFs on major stock exchanges. This helps promote market stability by adding liquidity and transparency during times of stress.
- Bond ETFs allow ordinary investors to gain passive exposure to benchmark bond indices in an inexpensive way.
- Investors of bond ETFs are exposed to the risk of interest rate changes.
- Bond ETFs are typically of two types: They either track a specific maturity bucket like short, medium or long term or they track a target maturity where they invest in bonds with similar maturity as the product.
- Target Maturity Bond ETFs: They provide predictable returns like Fixed Maturity Plans (FMPs), if they are held till maturity.

Other type of ETFs

- **Market ETFs:** Designed to track a particular index like the NIFTY.
- **Sector and industry ETFs:** Designed to provide exposure to a particular industry, such as oil, pharmaceuticals, or high technology.
- **Commodity ETFs:** Designed to track the price of a commodity, such as gold, oil, or corn.
- **Style ETFs:** Designed to track an investment style or market capitalization focus, such as large-cap value or small-cap growth.
- **Foreign market ETFs:** Designed to track non-Indian markets, such as US's Dollar 30 or Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA).
- **Inverse ETFs:** Designed to profit from a decline in the underlying market or index.
- **Actively managed ETFs:** Designed to outperform an index, unlike most ETFs, which are designed to track an index.
- **Exchange-traded notes:** In essence, debt securities backed by the creditworthiness of the issuing bank; created to provide access to illiquid markets and have the added benefit of generating virtually no short-term capital gains taxes.
- **Alternative investment ETFs:** Innovative structures, such as ETFs that allow investors to trade volatility or gain exposure to a particular investment strategy, such as currency carry or covered call writing.

Benefits

- **Lower Costs:** An investor who buys an ETF doesn't have to pay an advisory/management fee to the fund manager and taxes are relatively lower in ETFs.
- **Lower Holding Costs:** As commodity ETFs are widely traded in, there isn't any physical delivery of commodity. The investor is just provided with an ETF certificate, similar to a stock certificate.
- **Exposure to debt market:** Bond ETFs are a cost-effective way for investors to take debt-market exposure.
- **Tax considerations:** ETFs tend to be very tax efficient and ideal for holding in taxable accounts. Since ETFs don't sell shares very often and their portfolio turnover is very low, it is very rare for them to generate a taxable distribution for their shareholders.
- IETFs also have the option of making an "in-kind" distribution to shareholders if they want to sell themselves and want the cash.
- However, if the ETF's portfolio generates dividend income, this income is taxable.
- **Transparency:** The entire portfolio held by the bond ETF is disclosed on a daily basis to investors.
- This is unlike conventional bond funds which disclose portfolios at the end of every month.
- Further, since bond ETFs are listed on exchanges, they provide live price updates after every trade.
- **Liquid:** Being listed on the exchanges, bond ETFs also claim to offer liquidity—ability to buy and sell units instantly—for the investor.
- The liquidity in bond ETFs will depend on how actively market makers buy and sell units on the exchange in bulk.
- This will allow the investor to fetch a purchase or sale price closer to the fair value of the ETF, as indicated by its net asset value (NAV).
- **Increasing participation:** In India, retail participation in corporate bond market is shallow due to structural challenges like poor accessibility, lack of transparency and awareness. Bond ETFs can address these challenges and can play an important role in increasing retail investor participation in corporate bond market.

Disadvantages

- Several ETFs in India are plagued by crippling illiquidity. In the absence of trading volumes, investors often end up buying or selling at a steep premium, or discount to the prevailing NAV.
- While lower cost enhances the return potential of ETFs, absence of liquidity can effectively wipe out cost benefits. Conventional bond funds do not face these issues.
- If evidence is to go by, the initial liquidity in these products will be low, restricting investor's ability to move in and out at a desired price.
- If the ETFs are not able to amass a decent corpus size, poor liquidity will continue. C
- Bond ETFs cannot assure return to investors any more than conventional bond funds, except certain categories of bond ETFs such as target maturity bond ETFs which have a defined maturity date.
- Unlike actively managed bond funds, bond ETFs will not be in a position to gain from opportunities emerging from movements in interest rates or credit spreads.

20

SETTING UP OF NATIONAL INVESTMENT & MANUFACTURING ZONES

- Government notified the National Manufacturing Policy(NMP) in 2011.
- The Policy is based on the principle of industrial growth in partnership with the States. National Investment & Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs) are one of the important instruments of the policy. Government has already granted final approval to the NIMZ in Sangareddy district, Telangana. Further, the proposal for granting final approval of establishment of Hyderabad Pharma City NIMZ in Rangareddy district, Telangana has been considered and recommended by the High Level Committee (HLC).
- A letter of Chief Minister of Telangana was received in which CM has requested to release an amount of Rs. 500 Crores for development of external and internal infrastructure under Phase-1 of Zaheerabad NIMZ in Sangareddy district of Telangana. In this regard, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade(DPIIT) had already conveyed to the State Government of Telangana that DPIIT's financial commitment is limited to extending assistance of Rs. 3 crores for funding the cost of master planning.
- For development of infrastructure in the NIMZ, the role of DPIIT is limited to coordination and no finances from DPIIT are committed for this purpose. The project proposals need to be prepared by the State Government and processed for approval as per norms and procedures applicable to Central Sector/ Centrally Sponsored/State Sector schemes/projects. DPIIT will forward such requisitions to the concerned Ministries and coordinate between State Government and line Ministries.
- DPIIT has already released Rs. 3 Crores to the SPV of NIMZ for funding the cost of master planning of NIMZ in Sangareddy district of Telangana. The Department had also forwarded the proposals, submitted by TSIIC, of External infrastructure linkages, i.e. Road linkages and Rail linkages, for phase-1 of the said NIMZ to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Ministry of Railways respectively. The comments of Ministry of Railways have already been conveyed to Government of Telangana. Further, no proposal for internal infrastructure in the NIMZ has been received from the State Government.
- The progress of NIMZ in Sangareddy district of Telangana was further reviewed on 14th November, 2019, in the 6th meeting of High Level Committee.

21 STATUS OF LEATHER INDUSTRY

- The following measures have been taken by the Government for promotion of leather industry in the past three years:
 - 1. Central sector scheme 'Indian Footwear, Leather & Accessories Development Programme' is under implementation for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20. The scheme aims at development of infrastructure for the leather sector, address environment concerns specific to the leather sector, facilitate additional investments, employment generation and increase in production. Details of the Indian Footwear, Leather & Accessories Development Programme are enclosed as Annexure.
 - 2. As per inputs received from Department of Commerce, following steps have been taken for export promotion during last three years:
 - 3. Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS): 2% across the board enhancement of duty credit scrip under Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) for shipments made from 1.11.2017. Accordingly, notified leather products and footwear are now getting 5% MEIS scrip while finished leather is getting 4% (some categories of finished leather are getting 5%).
- Goods and Service Tax (GST) Rates for following leather industry related items have been reduced:
 - Reduction of GST rate from 28% to 18% for leather products, leather garments, leather chemicals from November 15, 2017
 - Reduction of GST rate from 12% to 5% for finished leather and composition leather from November 15, 2017
 - Reduction of GST on job work for manufacturing leather goods and footwear from 18% to 5% from January 25, 2018
 - Reduction of GST on Common Effluent Treatment Plants services from 18% to 12% from January 25, 2018
 - 5% concessional GST extended to footwear having a retail sale price up to Rs. 1000 per pair from 27th July 2018, which was earlier available for footwear with retail sale price up to Rs.500/-.
 - GST reduction on Slide Fasteners and Parts of Slide Fasteners (used as inputs) from 18% to 12% from 27th July 2018.
- Duty Free Import of Inputs: Enhancement of duty free limit (Basic Customs duty exemption) for import of critical import by manufacturer exporters of footwear and other leather products from 3% to 5% of Free on Board (FOB) value of exports in the previous year, as announced in Union Budget 2017-18.
- Interest equalization rate was enhanced from 3% to 5% for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises units from November 2, 2018 on pre-shipment and post-shipment rupee export credit.
- Removal of Animal Quarantine clearance for most of the categories of finished and crust leathers imported into India as notified vide Gazette Notification No. 5758 (E) dated 16th November 2018 issued by Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DAHD&F).
- In order to promote Green Tanning, the Union Budget 2017-18 announced the reduction of Basic Customs Duty on Vegetable Tanning Extracts namely Wattle extract [3201 20 00] and Myrobalan fruit extract [3201 90 20] from 7.5% to 2.5%.

22 INDIAN FOOTWEAR, LEATHER & ACCESSORIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- Human Resource Development (HRD) sub-scheme: HRD sub-scheme provides assistance for Placement Linked Skill Development training to unemployed persons at Rs. 15,000 per person,

for skill up-gradation training to employed workers at Rs. 5,000 per employee and for training of trainers at Rs. 2 lakh per person.

- Integrated Development of Leather Sector (IDLS) sub-scheme: IDLS sub-scheme incentivizes investment and manufacturing including job creation by providing backend investment grant/subsidy at 30% of the cost of new Plant and Machinery to Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and at 20% of the cost of Plant and Machinery to other units for Modernization /technology upgradation in existing units and also for setting up of new units.
- Establishment of Institutional Facilities sub-scheme: The sub-scheme provides assistance to Footwear Design & Development Institute (FDDI) for upgradation of some of the existing campuses of FDDI into "Centres of Excellence" and establishing 3 new fully equipped skill centres alongside the upcoming Mega Leather Cluster.
- Mega Leather, Footwear and Accessories Cluster (MLFAC) sub-scheme: The MLFAC sub-scheme provides infrastructure support to the Leather, Footwear and Accessories Sector by establishment of Mega Leather, Footwear and Accessories Cluster. Graded assistance is provided up to 50% of the eligible project cost, excluding cost of land with maximum Government assistance being limited to Rs. 125 crore.
- Leather Technology, Innovation and Environmental Issues sub-scheme: Under this sub-scheme, assistance is provided for upgradation/installation of Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) at 70% of the project cost. The sub-scheme also provides for support to national level sectoral industry council/ association and support for preparation of vision document for Leather Footwear and Accessories Sector.
- Promotion of Indian Brands in Leather, Footwear and Accessories Sector sub-scheme: Under this sub-scheme, the eligible units approved for Brand Promotion are assisted. The Government assistance is limited to 50% of total project cost subject to a limit of Rs.3 crore for each brand, each year for 3 years.
- Additional Employment Incentive for Leather, Footwear and Accessories Sector sub-scheme: Under this sub-scheme, employers' contribution of 3.67% to Employees' Provident Fund for all new employees in Leather, Footwear and Accessories sector, are provided for enrolling in EPFO for first 3 years of their employment.
- This information was given by the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

23**NEUTRINO OBSERVATORY IN TAMIL NADU**

- The India based Neutrino Observatory is being planned in the Theni district in Tamil Nadu.
- There has been opposition from some sections of the local populace.
- INO has been conducting outreach programmes in & around Madurai and Theni for students in schools & colleges, for faculty as well as journalists and media professionals.
- A large outreach program took place during May-August 2018 covering other towns in Tamil Nadu and a few in Kerala. Many students, faculty and members of the public have visited the INO transit campus where an 85 ton mini-ICAL detector is operational detecting naturally occurring cosmic ray muons. This is a much smaller version of the detector that is planned in the cavern at the end of a 2 km horizontal tunnel at the INO site.
- In June 2010, a public meeting, though not mandated by Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), was called by the Theni Collector. It was attended by about 1200 local people, including the Panchayat President, who endorsed the project. All the statutory norms and regulations are also followed in implementing the INO project. The INO site is not in the Eco Sensitive Area as identified by the High Level Working Group (HL WG) chaired by Dr. Kasturirangan and referred to in the MoEF Notification F.No.1-4/2012 - RE (Pt.) dated 13-11-2013.

24

CURTAIN RAISER: EXERCISE INDRA 2019

- Exercise INDRA 2019 a joint, tri services exercise between India and Russia will be conducted in India from 10 — 19 December 2019 simultaneously at Babina (near Jhansi), Pune, and Goa.
- The INDRA series of exercise began in 2003 and the First joint Tri Services Exercise was conducted in 2017, It will be a historic occasion for two of the world's greatest Armed Forces to join hands and successfully conduct an exercise of this magnitude with professionalism, to imbibe the best practices from each other, jointly evolve and drills to defeat the scourge of terror under the United Nation mandate.
- Company sized mechanised contingents, fighter and transport aircraft as well as ships of respective Army, Air Force and Navy will participate in this exercise of ten days duration. The exercise will consist of a five day training phase consisting of a comprehensive training curriculum. Tactical operations end drills such as cordon house intervention, handling and neutralisation of Improvised Explosive Devices, prevention of arms smuggling through the sea route and anti-piracy measures will be practiced.
- This training phase will be followed by a 72 hour validation exercise. INDRA 2019 will culminate on 19 December with an Integrated Fire Power demonstration and the Closing Ceremony.
- The contingents of both the countries will share expertise and their professional experience. The esprit-de-corps and goodwill shall be the key areas during the exercise which will facilitate further strengthening of bonds between the defence forces of India and Russia.

25

HEAT WAVE 2020: TWO-DAY WORKSHOP ON PREPAREDNESS, MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HEAT WAVE BEGINS IN BENGALURU

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in collaboration with the Government of Karnataka, is conducting a two-day national workshop on Preparedness, Mitigation and Management of Heat Wave in Bengaluru, beginning today. With this workshop, the National Disaster Management Authority has initiated efforts well in advance of the Heat wave season.
- Heat wave has emerged as one of the major severe weather events around the globe in recent years. Climate change is driving temperatures higher as well as increasing the frequency and severity of heat waves. India too is experiencing increased instances of heat waves every year - 23 States were affected by heat waves in 2019, up from 19 in 2018. Many cities recorded all-time high temperatures, exceeding 45 degrees Celsius in some of the worst-affected States this year. NDMA has been closely working with vulnerable States to reduce the adverse impacts of heat wave.
- Sustained efforts - timely release, updation and effective implementation of the National Guidelines on Heat Wave, preparation of Heat Action Plans by vulnerable States and cities, regular follow-up and monitoring by NDMA, extensive awareness generation campaigns, preparedness workshops in 2017, 2018 and 2019 - have significantly brought down the number of heat-related deaths and illnesses in the past few years.
- Speaking on the occasion, Shri G. V. V. Sarma, Member Secretary, NDMA, emphasised upon the importance of the workshop by stating that Climate Change has led to rise of average summer temperature by 0.5oC in past five years. Since 2016, much has been done already with the active involvement of different state governments and civil society. The number of deaths due to heat wave related illnesses has reduced drastically. However, there is no scope for complacency. He said that this workshop will further help various stakeholders to understand the phenomenon of Heat wave, and thus enable them in mitigating its affects.

- Over the next two days, a range of topics from impact of Climate Change to emerging technologies, and from lessons learnt from the past to inter-agency co-ordination will be discussed in subsequent technical sessions. Members and senior officials from NDMA, experts on heat wave, early warning and forecasting agencies, State governments, research institutions and members of the civil society are participating in the workshop.

26 NATIONAL AYUSH GRID

- The AYUSH Grid is envisaged as a comprehensive IT backbone covering the different silos of the AYUSH Sector. Ministry of AYUSH has finalised components of AYUSH Grid Project in consultation with various stakeholders. The process of Expression of Interest (EOI) and Request for Proposal (RFP) for on-boarding of Project Management Consultancy (PMC) for the AYUSH Grid Project has been completed and the eligible agency discovered through the process has been selected.
- Ministry of AYUSH has taken up various pilot projects like AYUSH Hospital Management Information System (A-HMIS), Yoga locator application, Telemedicine, Yoga Portal, A-HMIS trainings, IT course for AYUSH Professionals, etc. which shall be merged into AYUSH Grid Project after completion of pilot period.
- Ministry of AYUSH has also signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) for technical help in AYUSH Grid Project and accordingly, Ministry has handed over projects of Dashboard, GIS facility for various functionalities of AYUSH and AYUSH Information Hub to National e- Governance Division(NeGD)/ Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geo-Informatics(BISAG).

27 DRAFT NATIONAL LOGISTIC POLICY

- The vision of the proposed policy is to drive economic growth and business competitiveness of the country through an integrated, seamless, efficient, reliable, green, sustainable and cost effective logistics network leveraging the best in technology, processes and skilled manpower.
- While, there is no official estimation of logistics cost for India, some private institutions have estimated the logistics cost to be 13 to 14 percent of the GDP. The proposed policy aims to reduce this to 9 -10 percent of the GDP.
- In order to simplify documentation for exports and imports through digitization, Department of Revenue, CBIC have taken several initiatives like (i) SWIFT (Single Window Interface For Trade) (ii) Adoption of Digital Signature (iii) 24x7 Customs Clearance – for ‘facilitated’ Bills of Entry and factory stuffed containers and goods exported under free Shipping Bills at select ports (iv) Import Data Processing and Management System (IDPMS) – jointly launched with RBI to facilitate efficient data processing for payment of imports and effective monitoring (v) E-Sanchit (vi) Two new IT Modules ICEDASH i.e (Ease of doing business monitoring dashboard) and ATITHI app for electronic filing by passengers for baggage (vii) PCS 1X which is a platform for port related processes developed by Indian Ports Association.

28 BHARATIYA POSHAN KRISHI KOSH

- Ministry of Women and Child Development along with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) announced the Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh (BPKK) in New Delhi.

- Bhartiya Poshan Krishi Kosh” project has two components – Development of a Food Atlas and Documentation of promising practices for Jan-Andolan for POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- The Agro-Food Atlas is to act as a repository of diverse crops across 127 agro-climatic zones of the country having three parts- crops currently being grown, agro-ecological conditions (soil, organic carbon content, ground water availability etc) and guidance on how a greater diversity of crops could be encouraged in a particular district or block to promote dietary diversity and nutrition.
- The project includes diverse data sources like National Sample Survey, Agri-Census, Soil Health Cards, ISRO’s Advanced Wide Field Sensor (AWiFS) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA’s) Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectro-Radio meter.
- The project also documents social, behavioral and cultural practices that promote and reinforce healthy dietary behaviors. Identification of promising practices with the help of a multi-disciplinary group of experts and developments of a tool kit to disseminate best strategies for Social and Behavioural Change Communication, specific to population groups in those regions is also a part of it.
- A Technical Support Unit has been set-up under NITI Aayog which undertakes/conducts/ facilitates regular monitoring and evaluation of the National Nutrition Mission to assess the impact of the programme. A National Council on India’s Nutritional Challenges under the Chairmanship of Vice-Chairman NITI Aayog has been constituted to provide policy direction, review and effective coordination and convergence between Ministries which have a sectoral responsibility for the challenge of nutrition.
- Ministry of WCD is addressing the issue of malnutrition through various schemes including POSHAN Abhiyaan. Under POSHAN Abhiyaan, Community Mobilization and Awareness Advocacy leading to Jan Andolan, to educate the people on nutritional aspects, are among various components to generate awareness and public participation.

29

RAILWAYS ‘RAILWIRE’ WI-FI GOES LIVE IN 5500 RAILWAY STATIONS

- Railways has successfully completed the work of providing free public Wi-Fi at 5500 stations across the country.
- Mahua Milan Railway Station of East Central Railway zone, became the 5500th station in the country to have free public Wi-Fi. This is a unique initiative as this Wi-Fi network is one of the largest Wi-Fi networks of the world.
- To transform the Railway stations into the hub of Digital inclusion, Indian Railways mandated RailTel, a Miniratna PSU under Ministry of Railways, to provide free high-speed Wi-Fi at the Railway stations.
- The journey started in January 2016 from the financial capital of India - Mumbai Central station and in a span of 46 months Railways has successfully provided Wi-Fi at 5500 stations across the country. The mission is to provide Wi-Fi at all Railway stations (except the halt ones). Along the journey, RailTel has roped in partners like Google, Tata Trust, PGCIL for some parts of the project and also got funding from Department of Telecom USOF for 200 stations. The Wi-Fi is being provided under the brand name of RailWire.
- The month of October 2019 saw total 1.5 crores of user logins in ‘RailWire’ Wi-Fi services across all stations consuming 10242 TB of data. Free access to high speed Wi-Fi will help in bridging the digital divide between rural and urban India. Students using their waiting time to download study materials, vendors using the service for digital payment transactions, daily passengers using their time at stations learning new skill or surfing net- the free Wi-Fi has been a boon to these people who otherwise suffer from poor connectivity issues.

- Designed to offer users the best Internet experience, RailWire Wi-Fi at Railway stations will be available to any user who has a smartphone with working mobile connection for KYC considerations. To use the Wi-Fi the user has to switch on the Wi-Fi mode on the smartphone and select the RailWire Wi-Fi network. The RailWire homepage automatically appears on the smartphone. The user has to enter his or her mobile number on this homepage. The user will get one-time password (OTP) in form of SMS in the message box which has to be entered in the home page of RailWire. After entering OTP Users will be able to access high speed internet & can start internet browsing.

30

TRIFED CELEBRATES 100 DAYS OF PRIME MINISTER VAN DHAN YOJANA AND FORGES ASSOCIATION WITH GLOBAL FASHION DESIGNER RITU BERI

- TRIFED updated the media on the completion of '100 days of Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY)', a national programme driven by TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs, aimed at empowering tribals all over the country to make them entrepreneurs.
- PMVDY is a Market Linked Tribal Entrepreneurship Development Program for forming clusters of tribal Self Help Groups and strengthening them into Tribal Producer Companies. It has been launched with participation from 27 States of the Country.
- During the short period after initiation of sanctioning the Van Dhan program on 27 Aug 2019, proposals for establishing 799 VDVks from 24 States have been received and TRIFED has sanctioned 676 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) in 18 States covering 2,00,740 beneficiaries for a sanctioned amount of Rs. 99.81 Cr.
- Every State will establish 2 demo units from their VDVks and currently, 11 States have identified 21 demo units that will be established by Dec 2019.
- TRIFED has also conducted two National level advocacy workshops and 5 State level advocacy workshops with participations from Chief Ministers, Ministers, Principal Secretaries, representatives from State Nodal Departments, Implementing Agencies, Mentoring Organizations, Tribal SHG members etc. for sensitizing them about the Van Dhan program and assisting them in preparation of State Van Dhan plan for establishing VDVks. TRIFED is also developing a robust web-based IT platform and mobile application for data collection, tracking, and monitoring of all the activities under PMVDY.
- TRIFED will establish 3000 VDVks each year over the next five years to cover 45 lakhs tribal households and around 2 crore tribal beneficiaries under the program are aimed to be helped. It shall leverage its long standing strengths in market development for tribal handicrafts and handlooms through its network of 117 TRIBES India outlets and engage with other marketing players for developing a nation-wide retail network for marketing of MFP value added products.
- TRIFED has also partnered with UNICEF for promoting Van Dhan program through the tribal Culture, Craft, Cuisine and Commerce.
- TRIFED's initiative #GoTribal with Tribes India will now find echo and resonance all over the country and the world under the aegis of Ms Beri.
- Speaking to the gathering, Ms. Beri expressed her enthusiasm for working closely with Tribes India and establishing a global footprint for the world-class products handcrafted by over 1,50,000 tribal artisans.

31

'GREEN GOOD DEEDS' INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND TO MOBILIZE PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION FOR CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change coordinates a Central Sector Scheme namely 'Environment Education, Awareness and Training' with an objective to promote environmental awareness among all sections of the society and to mobilize people's participation for conservation of environment.
- Through the National Green Corps programme, which is one of the components of this scheme, about one lakh fifty thousand Ecoclubs have been established in schools/colleges across the country and nearly 35 lakh students are actively involved in the programmes related to environment protection and conservation.
- The 'Green Good Deeds' initiative is about simple, practical steps that students/teachers/citizens can perform in their day-to-day life towards protection of environment.
- Taking forward the Green Good Deeds initiative, among other activities of the Ecoclubs, the Ecoclubs have been a centre stage for various environment protection and conservation activities like conducting cleanliness drives as part of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, plantation drives, awareness on waste minimisation, waste segregation, recycling and reuse etc. Various environment awareness programmes are being undertaken by the students like minimizing the use of single-use plastic, celebrating Green Diwali, making of Eco-friendly idols of Ganesh and seed balls, adopting water bodies, beach cleaning, etc.

32

NITI AAYOG REPORT ON WATER CRISIS

- The report titled "Composite Water Management Index", published by NITI Aayog in June 2018, mentions that India is undergoing the worst water crisis in its history and nearly 600 million people are facing high to extreme water stress.
- The report further mentions that India is placed at 120th amongst 122 countries in the water quality index, with nearly 70% of water being contaminated.
- As per the 5th Minor Irrigation Census (with reference year 2013-14) conducted by Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (now Ministry of Jal Shakti), there are 20.52 million wells in the country, which includes dug wells, shallow tube wells, medium tube wells and deep tube wells. On the other hand, NITI Aayog figures include only shallow, medium and deep tube wells and do not include dug wells.

33

DATA BANK OF FARMERS

- The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare has constituted a Task Force to develop a comprehensive Farmers' Database for better planning, monitoring, strategy formulation and smooth implementation of schemes for the entire country.
- This Centralised Farmers Database shall be useful for various activities like issuing soil health cards, dissemination of crop advisories to the farmers, precision farming, smart cards for farmers to facilitate e-governance, crop insurance, settlement of compensation claims, grant of agricultural subsidies, community/village resource centres etc.
- At present, Centralised Farmers Database has not been created in the country. However, under PM-

KISAN 90,165,852 number of farmers have been registered in the country as on 30.11.2019, out of which 5,813,813 number of farmers are registered in Rajasthan.

34

PSLV SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES RISAT-2BR1 AND NINE COMMERCIAL SATELLITES IN ITS FIFTIETH FLIGHT

- 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.
- PSLV-C48 lifted-off at 1525 Hrs (IST) from the First Launch Pad. After 16 minutes and 23 seconds, RISAT-2BR1 was successfully injected into an orbit of 576 km. Subsequently, nine commercial satellites were injected into their intended orbits. After separation, the two solar arrays of RISAT-2BR1 were deployed automatically and the ISRO Telemetry Tracking and Command Network at Bengaluru assumed control of the satellite.
- ISRO has achieved an important milestone in the history of PSLV by successfully launching its 50th mission.
- 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.

35

COMMERCIALISING R&D OF ISRO

- A new company by name, "NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)", has been incorporated on 06th March 2019, as a wholly owned Government of India Undertaking / Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE), under the administrative control of Department of Space (DOS) to commercially exploit the research and development work of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Centres and constituent units of DOS.
- The business activities of NSIL are mainly driven towards enabling Indian industries to productionise space systems through technology transfer mechanisms and to exploit the commercial opportunities emanating from the Indian space programme.
- NSIL has commenced its commercial business operations since its incorporation.

36

NATIONAL LOGISTICS POLICY

- The vision of the proposed policy is to drive economic growth and business competitiveness of the country through an integrated, seamless, efficient, reliable, green, sustainable and cost effective logistics network leveraging best in class technology, processes and skilled manpower.
- Though, there is no official estimation of logistics cost for India, some private institutions have estimated the logistics cost to be 13 to 14 percent of the GDP. The proposed policy aims to reduce this to 9 -10 percent of the GDP.
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37 PREDATORY PRICING BY E-COMMERCE COMPANIES

- Department for Promotion Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in 2016 notified Guidelines for FDI on e-commerce. However, allegations were made against e-commerce companies that the marketplaces were violating the norms laid down in 2016.
- In 2018 DPIIT provided further clarification on FDI policy in relation to e-commerce. It stipulates that e-commerce entities providing market place will not directly or indirectly influence the sale price of goods or services and will maintain level playing field. Services should be provided by e-commerce marketplace entity or other entities in which e-commerce marketplace entity has direct or indirect equity participation or common control, to vendors on the platform at arm's length and in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. Such services will include but not limited to fulfilment, logistics, warehousing, advertisement/ marketing, payments, financing etc. Cash back provided by group companies of marketplace entity to buyers will be fair and non-discriminatory.
- Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has represented that large e-commerce platforms are in violation of Press Note 2 of 2018 of the FDI Policy as they are engaging in predatory pricing and are providing excessive discounts.
- In this regard, responses/clarifications were sought from e-commerce companies concerned on the allegations made by CAIT. All e-commerce companies, in their responses have maintained that they do not exercise any control over sellers and operate a pure marketplace. Any discount which is offered are offered by the seller/vendor or the respective brand alone.
- CAIT has also filed a petition with the Jodhpur Bench of Rajasthan High Court alleging FDI policy violations by e-commerce companies like Flipkart and Amazon which is sub-judice.
- Imposition of unfair or discriminatory prices (including predatory pricing) by a dominant enterprise or group is prohibited under provisions of Section 4 of the Competition Act, 2002. The Act provides for establishment of a quasi-judicial body viz the Competition Commission of India (CCI) which decides matters of anti-competitive practices, including inter alia predatory pricing, on a reference by the aggrieved party.
- This information was given by the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

38 MEDICAL DEVICE PARK

- Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers has a sub-scheme viz. Assistance to Medical Device Industry for Common Facility Center under the umbrella scheme for Development of Pharmaceuticals Industry.
- Under this sub-scheme, financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 25 Crore or 70% of the project cost, whichever is less may be provided for creation of common facilities under any Medical Device Park promoted by State Governments/State Corporations.
- Department of Pharmaceuticals has received four proposals under this sub-scheme from (i) Andhra Pradesh Medtech Zone Ltd. (AMTZ), Andhra Pradesh, (ii) Telangana Medical Device Park, Telangana (iii) Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC), Kerala & (iv) HLL, Medipark Ltd (HML), Tamil Nadu. Department of Pharmaceuticals has given 'in-principle' approval to all the said proposals.

39

PRIME MINISTER CHAIRS FIRST MEETING OF NATIONAL GANGA COUNCIL

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired the first meeting of the National Ganga Council in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh today.
- The Council has been given overall responsibility for superintendence of pollution prevention and rejuvenation of River Ganga Basin, including Ganga and its tributaries. The first meeting of the Council was aimed at reinforcing the importance of a 'Ganga-centric' approach in all departments of the concerned states as well as relevant Central Ministries.
- The meeting was attended by Union Ministers for Jal Shakti, Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development, Health, Urban Affairs, Power, Tourism, Shipping and Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, Vice Chairman Niti Aayog and other senior officials. The state of West Bengal was not present in the meeting and Jharkhand did not participate because of the ongoing elections and the Model Code of Conduct being in force.
- Prime Minister, while reviewing the progress of work done and deliberating on various aspects of cleaning river Ganga with a focus on 'swachhta', 'aviralta' and 'nirmalta'. He observed that Maa Ganga is the holiest river on the sub-continent and its rejuvenation should embody a shining example of cooperative federalism. Prime Minister said that rejuvenation of Ganga has been a long pending challenge for the country. He noted that a lot had been accomplished since the Government took up 'Namami Gange' in 2014 as a comprehensive initiative integrating various government efforts and activities with the aim of pollution abatement, conservation and rejuvenation of Ganga, notable achievements being zero waste creation by paper mills and reduction in pollution from tanneries; but much more needs to be done.
- For the first time, the Central Government had made commitment of Rs. 20,000 crores for the period 2015-20 to the five states through which Ganga passes, to ensure adequate as well as uninterrupted water flows in the river. Rs. 7700 crores have already been spent so far, prominently for construction of new sewage treatment plants.
- Prime Minister emphasized that an improvement framework for Nirmal Ganga would require fullest cooperation from the public at large and greater awareness through dissemination of best practices from cities situated along the banks of national rivers. Efficiency of District Ganga Committees should be improved in all districts, in order to provide a effective framework for expeditious implementation of plans.
- The Government has set up the Clean Ganga Fund (CGF) to facilitate contributions from individuals, NRIs, corporate entities for funding Ganga rejuvenation projects. Hon'ble PM has personally donated Rs. 16.53 crores to CGF, from the amount realized from auction of the gifts he received since 2014 and the prize money of the Seoul Peace prize.
- Prime Minister urged for a holistic thinking process where 'Namami Gange' evolves to 'Arth Ganga' or a sustainable development model with a focus on economic activities related to Ganga. As part of this process, farmers should be encouraged to engage in sustainable agriculture practices, including zero budget farming, planting of fruit trees and building plant nurseries on the banks of Ganga. Priority could be given to women Self Help Groups and ex-servicemen organizations for these programs. Such practices, along with creation of infrastructure for water sports and development of camp sites, cycling and walking tracks etc , would help to tap the 'hybrid' tourism potential of the river basin area- for purposes of religious as well as adventure tourism. The income generated from encouraging eco-tourism and Ganga wildlife conservation and cruise tourism etc. would help to generate sustainable income streams for cleaning of Ganga.
- For monitoring the work progress and activities from various schemes and initiatives under Namami Gange and Arth Ganga, PM also gave directions for the setting up of a Digital Dashboard where data from villages and urban bodies should be monitored on a daily basis by Niti Ayog and Ministry of Jal Shakti. Prime Minister also said that like aspirational districts, all districts bordering Ganga should be made a focus area for monitoring efforts under Namami Gange.
