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# PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (PIB) IAS UPSC – 25th January to 31st January – 2021

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Date February 1, 2021

## Press Information Bureau (PIB) IAS UPSC – 25th to 31st January, 2021

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### Table of Contents

- [Press Information Bureau \(PIB\) IAS UPSC – 25th to 31st January, 2021](#)
- [GS-2](#)
- [National Baseline Geoscience Data Generation Programmes](#)
- [Nation celebrates 11th National Voters' Day](#)
- [India signs Strategic Partnership Agreement with International Energy Agency \(IEA\)](#)
- [World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue – Key Highlights](#)
- [Agreement for financial support to STARS project signed between DEA and World Bank](#)
- [GS-3](#)
- [Climate Adaptation Summit 2021](#)
- [2021: Year of Indo-French alliance towards a Greener Planet](#)
- [Green tax to be imposed on older vehicles soon](#)
- [Launch of National Marine Turtle Action Plan](#)
- [Successful Maiden Test Launch of Akash-NG Missile](#)

### [ARCHIVES](#)

### GS-2

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## National Baseline Geoscience Data Generation Programmes

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To expedite exploration activities in the country, Geological Survey of India (GSI), has embarked upon an ambitious scheme to complete some major National level surveys by 2024:

**National Geochemical Mapping (NGCM):** It is an all India programme to cover the entire surface area of the country by geochemical sampling. The NGCM work will generate distribution pattern of 62 elements (samples collected at 1km x 1km grid) for use

in managing and developing natural resources; for application in environmental, agricultural, human health, other social concerns and to search for hidden mineral deposits.

**National Geophysical Mapping (NGPM):** The anomaly maps derived from the processed gravity and magnetic data provides all stakeholders a framework to design exploration strategies.

**National Aero Geophysical Mapping Program (NAGMP):** First of its kind project in the country, its objectives are to delineate concealed, deep seated structure/ litho-units capable of hosting mineralization, delineate extension of the existing mineralized zone and understating of shallow crustal architecture in the context of mineral occurrence. It is for the first time that the multi-sensor aero-geophysical surveys (magnetic gradiometry and spectrometric) are being carried out by adopting such large regional scale survey parameters of 300 m traverse line spacing with aircraft flown at 80 m above ground level.

GSI is also going to adopt sophisticated deep penetration geophysical techniques such as **Magneto-Telluric Surveys** and **Deep Seismic Reflection Surveys (DSRS)** in order to define the crustal architecture for deep seated mineral targeting.

GSI has also initiated its flagship initiative of **National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR)** for collation of all the geoscience data of the country involving GSI, other national organizations with geoscience as a focused activities, all the state directorate of mines and geology, the academia engaged in research and development in the domain, the CPSEs engaged in exploration and geoscientific pursuits, and private sector agencies working in the domain. It aims at integrating the collected data by GSI and the similar organizations to build a repository on the digital medium entailing multiple user access.

#### **Significance of these Programmes:**

- The collation, assimilation and integration of the data generated from the above projects and further interpretation will lead to identification of more areas for mineral exploration in the country.
- The increased investment in mineral exploration will build a robust pipeline of prospective mineral blocks for auction. This will ensure long-term viability and continuity of mining in the country taking India towards the cherished goal of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.
- The data generated through this mapping activity has helped to build up the knowledge database for National Geo-scientific information, which helps in boosting mineral exploration activities, and other earth science related socio-economic activities and programmes.

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## **Nation celebrates 11th National Voters' Day**

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***(Topic: Elections)***

National Voters' Day is celebrated all across the country on January 25 every year since 2011, to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, i.e. 25th January 1950. The main purpose of the National Voters Day celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize enrolment, especially for new voters.

**Theme:** "Making Our Voters Empowered, Vigilant, Safe and Informed"

## **Background**

- Election Commission of India is a Constitutional Body created under Article 324 of the Constitution of India.
- The first Chief Election Commissioner was appointed on 21st March 1950. Since its creation, the Commission was a single member body except for a brief period from 16th October 1989 to 1st January 1990 when it was converted into a three member body.
- Subsequently, since 1st October 1993, the Commission has been a three-member body, consisting of the Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.
- The National Voters' Day celebration was initiated in India in 2011 by the then-President of India, Pratibha Devi Patil, on the 61st foundation day of Election Commission of India.
- The Constitution (Sixty-First Amendment) Act, 1988 had lowered the threshold voting age from 21 years to 18 years.

## **Launch of**

**Election Commission of India's Web Radio:** 'Hello Voters' – an online digital radio service.

**e-EPIC (Electronic Electoral Photo Identity Card) programme:** The e-EPIC is a non-editable secure portable document format (PDF) version of the EPIC (approx. 250 KB) which can be downloaded on mobile or in a self-printable form on the computer.

- A voter can thus store the card on his mobile, upload it on Digi locker or print it and self-laminate it. This is in addition to physical IDs known as PVC EPIC being issued for fresh registration.
- The e-EPIC will also have a secured QR code with the serial number, part number, date of poll, etc along with the image of the voter for identification.
- The e-EPIC initiative would be launched in two phases:-
  - **First phase-** It will start from From January 25 to 31. Only new voters can apply for the voter-ID card and register their mobile numbers in Form-6 to download the e-EPIC by authenticating their mobile number. The mobile numbers should be unique and not be previously registered.
  - **Second phase-** It will start from February 1 and will be open for the general voters. People who have given their mobile numbers (linked one) they can also download their e-EPIC.

## India signs Strategic Partnership Agreement with International Energy Agency (IEA)

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*(Topic: India and International organisations)*

The Framework for Strategic Partnership between the International Energy Agency (IEA) members and the Government of India was signed on 27th January, 2021.

**Aim:** To strengthen mutual trust and cooperation & enhance global energy security, stability and sustainability. This partnership will lead to an extensive exchange of knowledge and would be a stepping stone towards India becoming a full member of the IEA.

The contents of the Strategic partnership will be jointly decided by the IEA Members and India, including

- A phased increase in benefits and responsibilities for India as an IEA Strategic partner
- Building on existing areas of work within Association and the Clean Energy Transitions Programme (CETP), such as Energy Security, Clean & Sustainable Energy, Energy Efficiency, Enhancing petroleum storage capacity in India, Expansion of gas-based economy in India etc.

The IEA Secretariat will be responsible for implementation of the cooperative activities in India and for facilitating discussion between the IEA Members and India to further develop the Strategic Partnership.

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## World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue – Key Highlights

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*(Topic: India and International organisations)*

- **Effective containment of Corona in India has saved the humanity from a very big tragedy** – India moved forward with proactive and pro-participation approach and worked on strengthening the COVID specific health infrastructure, trained its human resource to tackle the pandemic and used technology massively in testing and tracking of the cases.
- **Aatamnirbhar Bharat movement is committed to global good and global supply chain** – India has maintained economic activity by starting infrastructure projects worth billions of rupees and initiating special schemes for employment. Earlier we focused on saving lives now everyone is focussed on the growth of the country. India's ambition of self-reliance will strengthen globalism anew and will help in Industry 4.0,
- India offers a predictable and friendly environment from tax regime to FDI norms

- **Country's digital profile has been completely transformed** – India is working on all the four factors of Industry 4.0- connectivity, automation, artificial intelligence or machine learning and real-time data. India is among the countries where data charges are the cheapest and mobile connectivity and smart phones have reached far and wide. India's automation design expert pool is vast and the country has made a mark in the field of AI and machine learning. Growing digital infrastructure has made digital solutions everyday part of life in India. Digital Infrastructure has made public service delivery efficient and transparent. India has started a campaign for providing easy access to health care by giving Unique Health ID to its citizens
- India is focussing on sustainable urbanization with focus on ease of living, ease of doing business and climate sensitive development – This commitment has led to investment of 150 billion dollars were invested in urban India during 2014 to 2020.

## **Agreement for financial support to STARS project signed between DEA and World Bank**

### ***(Topic: India and International organisations)***

Agreement for the financial support of the implementation of Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) project of Ministry of Education was signed between Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) and World Bank along with Ministry of Education. The total project cost of STARS project is Rs 5718 crore with the financial support of World Bank amounting to US \$ 500 million (approximately Rs. 3700 crore) and rest coming as State share from the participating States, over a period of 5 years.

The project covers 6 States viz Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha. The identified States will be supported for various interventions for improving the quality of education.

The Program envisions improving the overall monitoring and measurement activities in the Indian school education system through interventions in selected states.

- STARS will draw on existing structure under Samagra Shiksha with the DoSEL, MoE as the main implementing agency at the national level.
- At the State level, the project will be implemented through the integrated State Implementation Society (SIS) for Samagra Shiksha.
- The proposed World Bank support under STARS is primarily in the form of a results-based financing instrument called Program for Results (PforR). This will ensure major reforms at the State level through a set of disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs).
- A State Incentive Grant (SIG) will be used to encourage States to meet desired project outcomes. The SIG matrix has been aligned with the intermediate outcome indicators as per the requirement of PforR instrument.
- An independent Verification agency (IVA) will verify each result before disbursement of funds.

STARS project will be instrumental in the implementation of various recommendations of National Education Policy 2020 i.e.

- Strengthening Early Childhood Education and Foundational Learning
- Improving Learning Assessment System
- ICT-enabled approaches in education
- Teachers Development
- Vocational education etc.

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## GS-3

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### Climate Adaptation Summit 2021

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*(Topic: Environment, Climate change)*

*Initiatives undertaken*

- Targeting 450 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity by 2030
- Promoting LED lights and saving 38 million tons of carbon-di-oxide emissions annually
- Restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030
- Providing clean cooking fuel to 80 million rural households
- Connecting 64 million households to piped water supply

The **International Solar Alliance** and the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** show the power of global climate partnership.

#### **Solar bank plan in India**

- The steering committee of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) is set to meet shortly to clear the decks for the World Solar Bank (WSB), which is expected to be headquartered in India.
- The country may become its lead member by taking a 30% stake in it through a \$600 million equity commitment.
- This would be the first multilateral development bank (MDB) headquartered in India and comes even as Beijing has taken the lead in creating the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank (NDB).

PM Modi said in his address, “We have promised ourselves that: We will not just meet our Paris Agreement targets, but exceed them; We will not just arrest environmental degradation but reverse it; and, We will not just create new capacities but make them an agent for global good.”

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### 2021: Year of Indo-French alliance towards a Greener Planet

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*(Topic: Environment, Climate change)*

**Objective:** To strengthen Indo-French cooperation in sustainable development, increase the effectiveness of actions in favor of global environment protection and give them greater visibility.

India has made significant progress towards climate change action & has already achieved 26% of reduction of emission intensity. As of 2020 the renewable capacity in India stands at 90 GW which includes 36 GW of solar energy & 38 GW of wind energy. India looks forward to strengthen the Indo-French cooperation in sustainable development, increase the effectiveness of actions in favor of the global environment protection and give them greater visibility.

The Indo-French Year of the Environment over the period 2021-2022 would be based on five main themes:

- Environmental protection
- Climate change
- Biodiversity conservation
- Sustainable urban development
- Development of renewable energies and energy efficiency
- It is also a platform for engaging in discussions on critical areas of collaboration relating to environment and allied areas.

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## **Green tax to be imposed on older vehicles soon**

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***(Topic: Environment, Climate change)***

Approval has been granted to the proposal to levy a “Green Tax” on old vehicles which are polluting the environment. The proposal will now go to the states for consultation before it is formally notified.

**Main principles to be followed while levying the Green Tax are:**

- Transport vehicles older than 8 years could be charged Green Tax at the time of renewal of fitness certificate, at the rate of 10 to 25 % of road tax;
- Personal vehicles to be charged Green Tax at the time of renewal of Registration Certification after 15 years;
- Public transport vehicles, such as city buses, to be charged lower Green tax;
- Higher Green tax (50% of Road Tax) for vehicles being registered in highly polluted cities
- Differential tax, depending on fuel (petrol/diesel) and type of vehicle;
- Vehicles like strong hybrids, electric vehicles and alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol, LPG etc., to be exempted;
- Vehicles used in farming, such as tractor, harvester, tiller etc., to be exempted;
- Revenue collected from the Green Tax to be kept in a separate account and used for tackling pollution, and for States to set up state-of-art facilities for emission monitoring

## **Benefits of the “Green Tax”:**

- To dissuade people from using vehicles which damage the environment
- To motivate people to switch to newer, less polluting vehicles
- Green tax will reduce the pollution level, and make the polluter pay for pollution.

Approval has also been granted on the policy of deregistration and scrapping of vehicles owned by Government department and PSU, which are above 15 years in age. It is to be notified, and will come into effect from 1st April, 2022.

It is estimated that commercial vehicles, which constitute about 5% of the total vehicle fleet, contribute about 65-70% of total vehicular pollution. The older fleet, typically manufactured before the year 2000 constitute less than 1 % of the total fleet but contributes around 15% of total vehicular pollution. These older vehicles pollute 10-25 times more than modern vehicles.

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## **Launch of National Marine Turtle Action Plan**

***(Topic: Biodiversity, Conservation)***

**Objective:** To have a conservation paradigm for marine mega fauna and marine turtles

Despite the immense economic, ecological and cultural values of marine habitats in India, marine mega fauna species and marine turtles face a wide variety of challenges including stranding and entanglement. Managing such challenging situations requires coordination, action and people's participation which would help in the long-term conservation of marine species and their habitats.

- Discusses ways and means to not only promote inter-sectoral action for conservation but also guide improved coordination amongst the government, civil society and all relevant stakeholders on the response to cases of stranding, entanglement, injury or mortality of marine mammals and also conservation of marine turtles.
- Actions to be taken for handling stranded animals on shore, stranded or entangled animals in the sea or on a boat, management actions for improved coordination, reducing threats to marine species and their habitats, rehabilitation of degraded habitats, enhancing people's participation, advance scientific research and exchange of information on marine mammals and marine turtles and their habitats.

### ***Significance***

India has rich marine biodiversity along a vast coastline of over 7,500 km. From colorful fish, sharks, including Whale Sharks, turtles and big mammals like whales, dolphins and dugongs to bright corals, marine habitats not only harbor diverse species but also provide resources essential for human wellbeing.

Millions of people depend on these resources ranging from maritime trade and transport, food, mineral resources, cultural traditions, spiritual values and inspiration that draws tourists from around the world.

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## Successful Maiden Test Launch of Akash-NG Missile

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*(Topic: Defence Technology)*

DRDO conducted the successful maiden launch of Akash-NG (New Generation) Missile from Integrated Test Range off the coast of Odisha.

- Akash-NG is a new generation Surface to Air Missile meant for use by Indian Air Force with an aim of intercepting high maneuvering low RCS aerial threats.
- The Akash-NG system has been developed with better deployability compared to other similar systems with canisterized launcher and much smaller ground system footprint.

### Prelims-oriented News

#### PRAGATI

PRAGATI is the multimodal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation involving central and state governments. It enables the PM to discuss the issues with the concerned central and state officials with full information and latest visuals of the ground-level situation.

- **Launched in:** 2015
- **Designed by:** Prime Minister's Office (PMO) team with the help of the National Informatics Center (NIC).
- **It is a three-tier system:** PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States.

#### Objective:

- Grievance Redressal
- Programme Implementation
- Project Monitoring

The PRAGATI platform uses latest technologies such as Digital data management, video-conferencing and geo-spatial technology.

#### Significance:

- It promotes cooperative federalism
- It is a robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders
- It is an innovative project in e-governance and good governance.

## 125th anniversary celebrations of 'Prabuddha Bharata' on 31st Jan

The journal 'Prabuddha Bharata' has been an important medium for spreading the message of India's ancient spiritual wisdom. Its publication was started from Chennai (erstwhile Madras), where it continued to be published for two years, after which it was published from Almora. Later, in April 1899, the place of publication of the Journal was shifted to Advaita Ashrama and it has been continuously published from there since then.

Some of the greatest personalities have left their imprint on the pages of 'Prabuddha Bharata' through their writings on Indian culture, spirituality, philosophy, history, psychology, art, and other social issues. Luminaries like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sister Nivedita, Sri Aurobindo, Former President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, among others, have contributed to the Journal over the years.

The Advaita Ashrama is working towards making the entire 'Prabuddha Bharata' archive available online on its website.

### Lala Lajpat Rai

- A stalwart of the freedom struggle, Lala Lajpat Rai ranks among India's most outstanding leaders
- Born on 28th January 1865 at a small village of Dhudike in district Ferozepur, Punjab, he was a contemporary of great stalwarts including Mahatma Gandhi
- Popularly known as '**Punjab Kesari**' or '**The Lion of Punjab**'

*Founded Servants of the People Society and Punjab National Bank*

Presided over the first session of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920, advocated for organized labour as the antidote of capitalism and imperialism.

## Key Highlights of Economic Survey 2020-21

### Saving Lives and Livelihoods amidst a Once-in-a-Century Crisis

- India focused on saving lives and livelihoods by its willingness to take **short-term pain for long-term gain**, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Response stemmed from the **humane principle** that:
  - **Human lives lost cannot be brought back**
  - GDP growth will recover from the temporary shock caused by the pandemic

An **early, intense lockdown provided a win-win strategy** to save lives, and preserve livelihoods via economic recovery in the medium to long-term. Strategy also motivated by the Nobel-Prize winning research by Hansen & Sargent (2001): a policy focused on **minimizing losses in a worst-case scenario** when uncertainty is very high

- India's strategy **flattened the curve**, pushed the peak to September, 2020. After the September peak, India has been unique in experiencing **declining daily cases despite increasing mobility**
- **V-shaped recovery**, as seen in 7.5% decline in GDP in Q2 and recovery across all key economic indicators vis-à-vis the 23.9% GDP contraction in Q1

COVID pandemic affected both demand and supply:

- India was the only country to announce **structural reforms to expand supply** in the medium-long term and avoid long-term damage to productive capacities
- **Calibrated demand side policies** to ensure that the accelerator is slowly pushed down only when the brakes on economic activities are being removed

A public investment programme centered around the **National Infrastructure Pipeline** to accelerate the demand push and further the recovery

**Upturn in the economy, avoiding a second wave of infections** – a sui generis case in strategic policymaking amidst a once-in-a-century pandemic

### **State of the Economy in 2020-21: A Macro View**

COVID-19 pandemic ensued **global economic downturn**, the most severe one since the Global Financial Crisis. The lockdowns and social distancing norms brought the already slowing **global economy to a standstill**. Global economic output estimated to fall by 3.5% in 2020 (IMF January 2021 estimates). Governments and central banks across the globe deployed various policy tools to support their economies such as lowering policy rates, quantitative easing measures, etc.

India adopted a **four-pillar strategy** of containment, fiscal, financial, and long-term structural reforms:

- **Calibrated fiscal and monetary support** was provided, cushioning the vulnerable during the lockdown and boosting consumption and investment while unlocking
- A **favourable monetary policy** ensured abundant liquidity and immediate relief to debtors while unclogging monetary policy transmission

As per the advance estimates by NSO, India's GDP is estimated to grow by (-) 7.7% in FY21 – a **robust sequential growth of 23.9%** in H2: FY21 over H1: FY21

- India's **real GDP** to record a **11.0% growth in FY2021-22** and **nominal GDP** to grow by **15.4%** – the **highest since independence**:
- Rebound to be led by low base and continued normalization in economic activities as the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines gathers traction
- **Government consumption** and **net exports** cushioned the growth from diving further down, whereas investment and private consumption pulled it down

- The recovery in second half of FY2020-21 is expected to be powered by **government consumption**, estimated to grow at **17% YoY**
- Exports expected to decline by 5.8% and imports by 11.3% in the second half of FY21
- India expected to have a **Current Account Surplus of 2% of GDP** in FY21, a **historic high after 17 years**
- On supply side, Gross Value Added (GVA) growth pegged at -7.2% in FY21 as against 3.9% in FY20:
- **Agriculture set to cushion the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Indian economy in FY21 with a growth of 3.4%**
- **Industry and services estimated to contract by 9.6% and 8.8% respectively during FY21**

Agriculture remained the silver lining while **contact-based services, manufacturing, construction were hit hardest**, and recovering steadily

India remained a **preferred investment destination** in FY 2020-21 with FDI pouring in amidst global asset shifts towards equities and prospects of quicker recovery in emerging economies:

- Net **FPI inflows** recorded an **all-time monthly high of US\$ 9.8 billion** in November 2020, as investors' risk appetite returned
- **India was the only country among emerging markets to receive equity FII inflows in 2020**

Buoyant SENSEX and NIFTY resulted in India's **market-cap to GDP ratio crossing 100% for the first time since October 2010**

**Softening of CPI inflation** recently reflects easing of supply side constraints that affected food inflation

Mild contraction of 0.8% in investment (as measured by Gross Fixed Capital Formation) in 2nd half of FY21, as against 29% drop in 1st half of FY21

Reignited **inter and intra state movement** and record-high monthly **GST collections** have marked the unlocking of industrial and commercial activity

The **external sector** provided an effective cushion to growth with India recording a **Current Account Surplus of 3.1% of GDP** in the first half of FY21:

- **Strong services exports** and weak demand leading to a sharper contraction in imports (merchandise imports contracted by 39.7%) than exports (merchandise exports contracted by 21.2%)
- **Forex reserves** increased to a level so as to cover 18 months worth of imports in December 2020
- **External debt** as a ratio to GDP increased to 21.6% at end-September 2020 from 20.6% at end-March 2020

- Ratio of forex reserves to total and short-term debt improved because of the sizable accretion in reserves

**V-shaped recovery** is underway, as demonstrated by a sustained resurgence in high frequency indicators such as power demand, e-way bills, GST collection, steel consumption, etc.

India became the **fastest country to roll-out 10 lakh vaccines** in 6 days and also emerged as a **leading supplier of the vaccine** to neighbouring countries and Brazil

**Economy's homecoming to normalcy** brought closer by the initiation of a mega vaccination drive:

- **Hopes of a robust recovery** in services sector, consumption, and investment have been rekindled
- Reforms must go on to enable India realize its potential growth and erase the adverse impact of the pandemic

India's **mature policy response** to the 'once-in-a-century' crisis provides important lessons for democracies to avoid myopic policy-making and demonstrates benefits of focusing on **long-term gains**

**Does Growth lead to Debt Sustainability? Yes, But Not Vice- Versa!**

**Growth leads to debt sustainability** in the Indian context but not necessarily vice-versa:

- Debt sustainability depends on the 'Interest Rate Growth Rate Differential' (IRGD), i.e., the difference between the interest rate and the growth rate
- In India, **interest rate on debt is less than growth rate** – by norm, not by exception

**Negative IRGD in India** – not due to lower interest rates but much higher growth rates – prompts a debate on fiscal policy, especially during growth slowdowns and economic crises

Growth causes debt to become sustainable in countries with higher growth rates; such clarity about the causal direction is not witnessed in countries with lower growth rates

Fiscal multipliers are disproportionately higher during economic crises than during economic booms

**Active fiscal policy** can ensure that the full benefit of reforms is reaped by limiting potential damage to productive capacity

Fiscal policy that provides an impetus to growth will lead to **lower debt-to-GDP ratio**

Given India's growth potential, **debt sustainability is unlikely to be a problem** even in the worst scenarios

**Desirable to use counter-cyclical fiscal policy** to enable growth during economic downturns

Active, counter-cyclical fiscal policy – not a call for fiscal irresponsibility, but to break the intellectual anchoring that has created an **asymmetric bias against fiscal policy**

**Does India's Sovereign Credit Rating Reflect Its Fundamentals? No!**

The **fifth largest economy in the world** has never been rated as the lowest rung of the investment grade (BBB-/Baa3) in sovereign credit ratings:

- Reflecting the economic size and thereby the ability to repay debt, the fifth largest economy has been predominantly rated AAA
- China and India are the only exceptions to this rule – China was rated A-/A2 in 2005 and now India is rated BBB-/Baa3

**India's sovereign credit ratings do not reflect its fundamentals:**

- A clear outlier amongst countries rated between A+/A1 and BBB-/Baa3 for S&P/Moody's, on several parameters
- Rated significantly lower than mandated by the effect on the sovereign rating of the parameter

Credit ratings map the **probability of default** and therefore reflect the willingness and ability of borrower to meet its obligations:

- India's **willingness to pay** is unquestionably demonstrated through its **zero sovereign default history**
- India's **ability to pay** can be gauged by low foreign currency denominated debt and **forex reserves**

Sovereign credit rating changes for India have **no or weak correlation with macroeconomic indicators**

India's fiscal policy should reflect Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's sentiment of '***a mind without fear***'

Sovereign credit ratings methodology should be made **more transparent, less subjective** and better attuned to reflect economies' fundamentals

**Inequality and Growth: Conflict or Convergence?**

The relationship between inequality and socio-economic outcomes vis-à-vis economic growth and socio-economic outcomes, is different in India from that in advanced economies.

Both inequality and per-capita income (growth) have similar relationships with socio-economic indicators in India, unlike in advanced economies

**Economic growth has a greater impact on poverty alleviation than inequality**

India must continue to focus on **economic growth to lift the poor out of poverty**

***Expanding the overall pie*** – redistribution in a developing economy is feasible only if the size of the economic pie grows

### **Healthcare takes centre stage, finally!**

COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of healthcare sector and its inter-linkages with other sectors – showcased how a health crisis transformed into an economic and social crisis

India's **health infrastructure must be agile** so as to respond to pandemics – healthcare policy must not become beholden to 'saliency bias'

**National Health Mission (NHM)** played a critical role in mitigating inequity as the access of the poorest to pre-natal/post-natal care and institutional deliveries increased significantly

Emphasis on NHM in conjunction with **Ayushman Bharat** should continue

An **increase in public healthcare spending from 1% to 2.5-3% of GDP** can decrease the **out-of-pocket expenditure from 65% to 35%** of overall healthcare spending

A **regulator for the healthcare sector** must be considered given the market failures stemming from information asymmetry

- Mitigation of information asymmetry will help **lower insurance premiums**, enable the offering of better products and **increase insurance penetration**
- Information utilities that help mitigate the information asymmetry in healthcare sector will be useful in **enhancing overall welfare**

**Telemedicine** needs to be harnessed to the fullest by investing in **internet connectivity** and **health infrastructure**

### **Process Reforms**

- India over-regulates the economy resulting in regulations being ineffective even with relatively good compliance with process
- The root cause of the problem of overregulation is an approach that attempts to account for every possible outcome
- Increase in complexity of regulations, intended to reduce discretion, results in even more non-transparent discretion
- The solution is to **simplify regulations** and **invest in greater supervision** which, by definition, implies greater discretion
- Discretion, however, needs to be balanced with **transparency**, systems of ex-ante accountability and ex-post resolution mechanisms
- The above intellectual framework has already informed reforms ranging from labour codes to removal of onerous regulations on the BPO sector

## **Regulatory Forbearance an emergency medicine, not staple diet!**

- During the Global Financial Crisis, regulatory **forbearance** helped borrowers tide over temporary hardship
- Forbearance continued long after the economic recovery, resulting in unintended consequences for the economy
- Banks exploited the forbearance window for window-dressing their books and misallocated credit, thereby damaging the quality of investment in the economy
- Forbearance represents emergency medicine that should be discontinued at the first opportunity when the economy exhibits recovery, not a staple diet that gets continued for years
- To promote judgement amidst uncertainty, **ex-post inquests must recognize the role of hindsight bias** and not equate unfavourable outcomes to bad judgement or malafide intent
- An **Asset Quality Review** exercise must be conducted immediately after the forbearance is withdrawn
- The **legal infrastructure** for the recovery of loans needs to be strengthened de facto

## **Innovation: Trending Up but Needs Thrust, Especially from the Private Sector**

- **India entered the top-50 innovating countries for the first time in 2020** since the inception of the Global Innovation Index in 2007, ranking **first in Central and South Asia**, and third amongst lower middle-income group economies
- India's gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) is lowest amongst top ten economies
- **India's aspiration must be to compete on innovation with the top ten economies**
- The **government sector contributes a disproportionately large share in total GERD** at three times the average of top ten economies
- The business sector's contribution to GERD, total R&D personnel and researchers is amongst the lowest when compared to top ten economies
- This situation has prevailed despite higher tax incentives for innovation and access to equity capital
- **India's business sector needs to significantly ramp up investments in R&D**
- Indian resident's share in total patents filed in the country must rise from the current 36% which is much below the average of 62% in top ten economies
- For achieving higher improvement in innovation output, India must focus on **improving its performance on institutions and business sophistication innovation inputs**

## **JAY Ho! PM'JAY' Adoption and Health outcomes**

**Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** – the ambitious program launched by Government of India in 2018 to provide healthcare access to the most vulnerable sections demonstrates **strong positive effects on healthcare outcomes in a short time**

PM-JAY is being used significantly for high frequency, low cost care such as dialysis and continued during the Covid pandemic and the lockdown.

Causal impact of PM-JAY on health outcomes by undertaking a Difference-in-Difference analysis based on National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-20) is following:

- Enhanced health insurance coverage: The proportion of households that had health insurance increased in Bihar, Assam and Sikkim from 2015-16 to 2019-20 by 89% while it decreased by 12% over the same period in West Bengal
- Decline in Infant Mortality rate: from 2015-16 to 2019-20, infant mortality rates declined by 20% for West Bengal and by 28% for the three neighbouring states
- Decline in under-5 mortality rate: Bengal saw a fall of 20% while, the neighbours witnessed a 27% reduction
- Modern methods of contraception, female sterilization and pill usage went up by 36%, 22% and 28% respectively in the three neighbouring states while the respective changes for West Bengal were negligible
- While West Bengal did not witness any significant decline in unmet need for spacing between consecutive kids, the neighbouring three states recorded a 37% fall
- Various metrics for mother and child care improved more in the three neighbouring states than in West Bengal.

Each of these health effects manifested similarly when we compare all states that implemented PM-JAY versus the states that did not

Overall, the comparison reflects **significant improvements in several health outcomes in states that implemented PM-JAY versus those that did not**

### **Bare Necessities**

**Access to the 'bare necessities' has improved across all States in the country in 2018 as compared to 2012**

- It is highest in States such as Kerala, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat while lowest in Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Tripura
- **Improvement in each of the five dimensions** viz., access to water, housing, sanitation, micro-environment and other facilities
- Inter-State disparities declined across rural and urban areas as the laggard states have gained relatively more between 2012 and 2018
- Improved disproportionately more for the poorest households when compared to the richest households across rural and urban areas

Improved access to the 'bare necessities' has led to **improvements in health indicators** such as infant mortality and under-5 mortality rate and also **correlates with future improvements in education indicators**

Thrust should be given to reduce variation in the access to bare necessities across states, between rural and urban and between income groups

The schemes such as **Jal Jeevan Mission, SBM-G, PMAY-G**, etc. may design appropriate strategy to reduce these gaps

A Bare Necessities Index (BNI) based on the large annual household survey data can be constructed using suitable indicators and methodology at district level for all/targeted districts to assess the progress on access to bare necessities.

### **Fiscal Developments**

- India adopted a **calibrated approach** best suited for a resilient recovery of its economy from COVID-19 pandemic impact, in contrast with a front-loaded large stimulus package adopted by many countries
- **Expenditure policy** in 2020-21 initially aimed at supporting the vulnerable sections but was re-oriented to boost overall demand and capital spending, once the lockdown was unwound
- **Monthly GST collections** have crossed the **Rs. 1 lakh crore** mark consecutively for the last 3 months, reaching its **highest levels in December 2020 ever since the introduction of GST**
- **Reforms in tax administration** have begun a process of transparency and accountability and have incentivized tax compliance by enhancing honest taxpayers' experience
- Central Government has also taken consistent steps to impart support to the States in the challenging times of the pandemic

### **External Sector**

COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp decline in global trade, lower commodity prices and tighter external financing conditions with implications for current account balances and currencies of different countries

India's **forex reserves at an all-time high of US\$ 586.1 billion as on January 08, 2021**, covering about 18 months worth of imports

India experiencing a Current Account Surplus along with robust capital inflows leading to a **BoP surplus since Q4 of FY2019-20**

Balance on the capital account is buttressed by **robust FDI and FPI inflows**:

- Net FDI inflows of US\$ 27.5 billion during April-October, 2020: 14.8% higher as compared to first seven months of FY2019-20

- Net FPI inflows of US\$ 28.5 billion during April-December, 2020 as against US\$ 12.3 billion in corresponding period of last year

In H1: FY21, steep contraction in merchandise imports and lower outgo for travel services led to:

- Sharper fall in current payments (by 30.8%) than current receipts (15.1%)
- Current Account Surplus of US\$ 34.7 billion (3.1% of GDP)

### **India to end with an Annual Current Account Surplus after a period of 17 years**

India's **merchandise trade deficit was lower** at US\$ 57.5 billion in April-December, 2020 as compared to US\$ 125.9 billion in the corresponding period last year

In April-December, 2020, **merchandise exports** contracted by 15.7% to US\$ 200.8 billion from US\$ 238.3 billion in April-December, 2019:

- Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) exports have contributed negatively to export performance during the period under review
- Non-POL exports turned positive and helped in improving export performance in Q3 of 2020-21
- Within Non-POL exports, agriculture & allied products, drugs & pharmaceutical and ores & minerals recorded expansion

Total **merchandise imports** declined by (-) 29.1% to US\$ 258.3 billion during April-December, 2020 from US\$ 364.2 billion during the same period last year:

- Sharp decline in POL imports pulled down the overall import growth
- Imports contracted sharply in Q1 of 2020-21; the pace of contraction eased in subsequent quarters, due to the accelerated positive growth in Gold and Silver imports and narrowing contraction in non-POL, non-Gold & non-Silver imports
- Fertilizers, vegetable oil, drugs & pharmaceuticals and computer hardware & peripherals have contributed positively to the growth of non-POL, non-Gold & non-Silver imports

### **Trade balance with China and the US improved as imports slowed**

**Net services receipts** amounting to US\$ 41.7 billion remained stable in April-September 2020 as compared with US\$ 40.5 billion in corresponding period a year ago.

**Resilience of the services sector** was primarily driven by software services, which accounted for 49% of total services exports

**Net private transfer receipts**, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, totaling US\$ 35.8 billion in H1: FY21 declined by 6.7% over the corresponding period of previous year

At end-September 2020, India's **external debt** placed at US\$ 556.2 billion – a decrease of US\$ 2.0 billion (0.4%) as compared to end-March 2020.

Improvement in **debt vulnerability indicators**:

- Ratio of forex reserves to total and short-term debt (original and residual)
- Ratio of short-term debt (original maturity) to the total stock of external debt.
- Debt service ratio (principal repayment plus interest payment) increased to 9.7% as at end-September 2020, compared to 6.5% as at end-March 2020

**Rupee appreciation/depreciation**:

- In terms of 6-currency nominal effective exchange rate (NEER) (trade-based weights), Rupee depreciated by 4.1% in December 2020 over March 2020; appreciated by 2.9% in terms of real effective exchange rate (REER)
- In terms of 36-currency NEER (trade-based weights), Rupee depreciated by 2.9% in December 2020 over March 2020; appreciated by 2.2% in terms of REER

**RBI's interventions in forex markets** ensured financial stability and orderly conditions, controlling the volatility and one-sided appreciation of the Rupee

**Initiatives undertaken to promote exports**:

- Production Linked Incentive (**PLI**) Scheme
- Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (**RoDTEP**)
- Improvement in logistics infrastructure and digital initiatives

**Money Management and Financial Intermediation**

**Accommodative monetary policy** during 2020: repo rate cut by 115 bps since March 2020

**Systemic liquidity** in FY2020-21 has remained in surplus so far. RBI undertook various conventional and unconventional measures like:

- Open Market Operations
- Long Term Repo Operations
- Targeted Long Term Repo Operations

**Gross Non-Performing Assets** ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks decreased from 8.21% at end-March, 2020 to 7.49% at end-September, 2020

The monetary transmission of lower policy rates to deposit and lending rates improved during FY2020-21

NIFTY-50 and BSE SENSEX reached **record high closing** of 14,644.7 and 49,792.12 respectively on January 20, 2021

The recovery rate for the Scheduled Commercial Banks through IBC (since its inception) has been over 45%

## Prices and Inflation

### Headline CPI inflation:

- Averaged 6.6% during April-December, 2020 and stood at 4.6% in December, 2020, mainly driven by rise in food inflation (from 6.7% in 2019-20 to 9.1% during April-December, 2020, owing to build up in vegetable prices)
- CPI headline and its sub groups witnessed inflation during April-October 2020, driven by substantial increase in price momentum – due to the **initial disruptions caused by COVID-19 lockdown**
- Moderated price momentum by November 2020 for most sub groups, coupled with positive base effect helped ease inflation

### Rural-urban difference in CPI inflation saw a decline in 2020:

- Since November 2019, CPI-Urban inflation has closed the gap with CPI-Rural inflation
- Food inflation has almost converged now
- Divergence in rural-urban inflation observed in other components of CPI like fuel and light, clothing and footwear, miscellaneous etc.

During April-December, 2019 as well as April-December, 2020-21, the major driver of CPI-C inflation was the **food and beverages** group:

Contribution increased to 59% during April-December, 2020, compared to 53.7% during April-December, 2019

**Thali cost increased** between June 2020 and November 2020, however a sharp fall in the month of December reflecting the fall in the prices of many essential food commodities

### State-wise trend:

- CPI-C inflation increased in most of the states in the current year
- Regional variation persists
- Inflation ranged from 3.2% to 11% across States/UTs during June-December 2020 compared to (-) 0.3% to 7.6% during the same period last year.

**Food inflation** driving overall CPI-C inflation due to the relatively more weight of food items in the index.

Steps taken to stabilize prices of food items:

- Banning of export of onions
- Imposition of stock limit on onions
- Easing of restriction on imports of pulses

### Gold prices:

- Sharp spike as investors turned to **gold as a safe haven investment amid COVID-19** induced economic uncertainties
- Compared to other assets, gold had considerably higher returns during FY2020-21

Consistency in import policy warrants attention:

- Increased dependence on imports of edible oils poses risk of fluctuations in import prices
- Imports impacting production and prices of domestic edible oil market, coupled with frequent changes in import policy of pulses and edible oils, add to confusion among farmers/producers and delay imports

## **Sustainable Development and Climate Change**

India has taken several proactive steps to **mainstream the SDGs** into the policies, schemes and programmes

**Voluntary National Review (VNR)** presented to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development

**Localisation of SDGs** is crucial to any strategy aimed at achieving the goals under the 2030 Agenda

Several States/UTs have created institutional structures for implementation of SDGs and also nodal mechanisms within every department and at the district levels for better coordination and convergence

Sustainable development remains core to the development strategy despite the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic crisis

Eight National Missions under **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** focussed on the objectives of adaptation, mitigation and preparedness on climate risks

**India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)** states that finance is a critical enabler of climate change action

The financing considerations will therefore remain critical especially as the country steps up the targets substantially

The goal of jointly mobilizing US\$ 100 billion a year by 2020 for climate financing by the developed countries has remained elusive

The postponement of COP26 to 2021 also gives less time for negotiations and other evidence-based work to inform the post-2025 goal

Despite overall growth in the global bond markets, green bond issuance in the first half of 2020 slowed down from 2019, possibly as a result of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic

**International Solar Alliance (ISA)** launched two new initiatives – ‘**World Solar Bank**’ and ‘**One Sun One World One Grid Initiative**’ – poised to bring about solar energy revolution globally

## **Agriculture and Food Management**

India’s **Agricultural (and Allied Activities) sector** has shown its resilience amid the adversities of COVID-19 induced lockdowns with a **growth of 3.4% at constant prices during 2020-21 (first advance estimate)**

The share of Agriculture and Allied Sectors in Gross Value Added (GVA) of the country at current prices is **17.8%** for the year 2019-20 (CSO-Provisional Estimates of National Income, 29th May, 2020)

**Gross Capital Formation (GCF)** relative to GVA showing a fluctuating trend from 17.7 % in 2013-14 to 16.4 % in 2018-19, with a dip to 14.7 % in 2015-16

**Total food grain production** in the country in the agriculture year 2019-20 (as per Fourth Advance Estimates), is **11.44 million tonnes** more than than during 2018-19

The **actual agricultural credit flow** was **₹13,92,469.81** crores against the target of ₹13,50,000 crores in 2019-20. The target for 2020-21 was ₹15,00,000 crores and a sum of ₹ 9,73,517.80 crores was disbursed till 30th November, 2020:

- **1.5 crore dairy farmers** of milk cooperatives and milk producer companies’ were targeted to provide Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) as part of Prime Minister’s AatmaNirbhar Bharat Package after the budget announcement of February 2020
- As of mid January 2021, a total of **44,673 Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs)** have been issued to fishers and fish farmers and an additional 4.04 lakh applications from fishers and fish farmers are with the banks at various stages of issuance

The **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana** covers over **5.5 crore farmer** applications year on year

- Claims worth **Rs. 90,000 crore** paid, as on 12th January, 2021
- Speedy claim settlement directly into the farmer accounts through Aadhar linkage
- **70 lakh farmers** benefitted and claims worth Rs. 8741.30 crores were transferred during COVID-19 lock down period

An amount of **Rs. 18000 crore** have been deposited directly in the bank accounts of **9 crore farmer families** of the country in December, 2020 in the 7th installment of financial benefit under the **PM-KISAN** scheme

**Fish production** reached an all-time high of 14.16 million metric tons during 2019-20:

GVA by the Fisheries sector to the national economy stood at ₹2,12,915 crores constituting 1.24% of the total national GVA and 7.28 % of the agricultural GVA

**Food Processing Industries (FPI)** sector growing at an Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) of around 9.99 % as compared to around 3.12 % in Agriculture and 8.25 % in Manufacturing at 2011-12 prices during the last 5 years ending 2018-19

**Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana:**

- 80.96 crore beneficiaries were provided foodgrains above NFSA mandated requirement free of cost till November, 2020.
- Over 200 LMT of foodgrains were provided amounting to a fiscal outgo of over Rs. 75000 Crores

**AatmaNirbhar Bharat Package:** 5 kg per person per month for four months (May to August) to approximately 8 crores migrants (excluded under NFSA or state ration card) entailing subsidy of Rs. 3109 crores approximately

**Industry and Infrastructure**

A strong **V-shaped recovery** of economic activity further confirmed by IIP data

The **IIP & eight-core index** further inched up to pre-COVID levels

The broad-based recovery in the IIP resulted in a growth of (-) 1.9 % in Nov-2020 as compared to a growth of 2.1 % in Nov-2019 and a nadir of (-) 57.3 % in Apr-2020

Further improvement and firming up in industrial activities are foreseen with the Government enhancing capital expenditure, the vaccination drive and the resolute push forward on long pending reform measures

**AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** with a stimulus package worth **15 % of India's GDP** announced

India's rank in the **Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)** Index for 2019 has moved upwards to the **63rd position in 2020** from 77th in 2018 as per the Doing Business Report (DBR):

- India has improved its position in 7 out of 10 indicators
- Acknowledges India as one of the top 10 improvers, the third time in a row, with an improvement of 67 ranks in three years
- It is also the highest jump by any large country since 2011

**FDI equity inflows were US\$49.98 billion in FY20** as compared to US\$44.37 billion during FY19:

- It is US\$30.0 billion for FY21 (up to September-2020)
- The bulk of FDI equity flow is in the non-manufacturing sector
- Within the manufacturing sector, industries like automobile, telecommunication, metallurgical, non-conventional energy, chemical (other than fertilizers), food processing, petroleum & natural gas got the bulk of FDI

Government has announced a **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** in the 10 key sectors under the aegis of **AatmaNirbhar Bharat** for enhancing India's manufacturing capabilities and exports:

To be implemented by the concerned ministries with an overall expenditure estimated at Rs.1.46 lakh crores and with sector specific financial limits

## **Services Sector**

India's services sector contracted by nearly 16 % during H1: FY2020-21, during the COVID-19 pandemic mandated lockdown, owing to its **contact-intensive nature**

**Key indicators** such as Services Purchasing Managers' Index, rail freight traffic, and port traffic, are all displaying a V-shaped recovery after a sharp decline during the lockdown

Despite the disruptions being witnessed globally, **FDI inflows** into India's services sector grew robustly by 34% Y-o-Y during April-September 2020 to reach US\$ 23.6 billion

The services sector accounts for over **54 % of India's GVA** and nearly **four-fifths of total FDI inflow into India**

The sector's share in GVA exceeds 50% in 15 out of 33 States and UTs, and is particularly more pronounced (greater than 85%) in Delhi and Chandigarh

Services sector accounts for **48% of total exports**, outperforming goods exports in the recent years

The **shipping turnaround time** at ports has almost halved from 4.67 days in 2010-11 to **2.62 days** in 2019-20

The Indian **start-up ecosystem** has been progressing well amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, being home to **38 unicorns** – adding a record number of 12 start-ups to the unicorn list last year

India's **space sector** has grown exponentially in the past six decades:

- Spent about US\$ 1.8 billion on space programmes in 2019-20
- Space ecosystem is undergoing several policy reforms to engage private players and attract innovation and investment

## **Social Infrastructure, Employment and Human Development**

The combined (Centre and States) **social sector expenditure** as % of GDP has increased in 2020-21 compared to last year.

India's rank in HDI 2019 was recorded at 131, out of a total 189 countries:

- India's **GNI per capita** (2017 PPP \$) has increased from US\$ 6,427 in 2018 to US\$ 6,681 in 2019

- **Life expectancy at birth** improved from 69.4 years in 2018 to 69.7 years in 2019

The access to data network, electronic devices such as computer, laptop, smart phone etc. gained importance due to **online learning** and **remote working** during the pandemic

Major proportion of workforce engaged as regular wage/salaried in the urban sector during the period of January 2019-March 2020 (quarterly survey of PLFS)

Government's incentive to boost employment through **AatmaNirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana** and rationalization and simplification of existing labour codes into 4 codes

Low level of female LFPR in India:

- Females spending disproportionately more time on unpaid domestic and care giving services to household members as compared to their male counterparts (Time Use Survey, 2019)
- Need to promote non-discriminatory practices at the workplace like pay and career progression, improve work incentives, including other medical and social security benefits for female workers

Under **PMGKP** announced in March, 2020, **cash transfers of upto Rs.1000** to existing old aged, widowed and disabled beneficiaries under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

An amount of Rs. 500 each was transferred for three months digitally into bank accounts of the women beneficiaries under **PM Jan Dhan Yojana**, totalling about **Rs. 20.64 crores**

**Free distribution of gas cylinders** to about **8 crore** families for three months

Limit of collateral free lending increased from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 20 lakhs for **63 lakh women SHGs** which would support 6.85 crore households

**Wages under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA** increased by Rs.20 from Rs.182 to Rs.202 w.e.f. 1st April, 2020

**India's fight against COVID-19:**

- Initial measures of lockdown, social distancing, travel advisories, practicing hand wash, wearing masks reduced the spread of the disease
- Country also acquired **self-reliance in essential medicines**, hand sanitizers, protective equipment including masks, PPE Kits, ventilators, COVID-19 testing and treatment facilities
- **World's largest COVID-19 vaccination drive** commenced on 16th January, 2021 using two indigenously manufactured vaccines



## PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (PIB) IAS UPSC – 1st February to 7th February – 2021

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 [iasbaba.com/2021/02/press-information-bureau-pib-ias-upsc-1st-february-to-7th-february-2021](https://iasbaba.com/2021/02/press-information-bureau-pib-ias-upsc-1st-february-to-7th-february-2021)

Date February 9, 2021

### Press Information Bureau (PIB) IAS UPSC – 1st to 7th February, 2021

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#### ARCHIVES

#### GS-2

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### The Report of the Fifteenth Finance Commission

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The Fifteenth Finance Commission (XVFC)'s ToR was unique and wide ranging in many ways. The Commission was asked to recommend performance incentives for States in many areas like power sector, adoption of DBT, solid waste management etc.

- Another unique ToR was to recommend funding mechanism for defence and internal security.
- The XVFC's Report is organised in four volumes.

In total, main report has 117 core recommendations.

#### Vertical devolution:

In order to maintain predictability and stability of resources, especially during the pandemic, XVFC has recommended maintaining the vertical devolution at 41 per cent – the same as in our report for 2020-21. It is at the same level of **42 per cent of the divisible pool** as recommended by FC-XIV. However, it has made the required adjustment of about 1 per cent due to the changed status of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir into the new Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

- In XVFC's assessment, gross tax revenues for 5-year period is expected to be 135.2 lakh crore. Out of that, Divisible pool (after deducting cesses and surcharges & cost of collection) is estimated to be 103 lakh crore.
- States' share at 41 per cent of divisible pool comes to 42.2 lakh crore for 2021-26 period.
- Including total grants of Rs. 10.33 lakh crore (details later) and tax devolution of Rs. 42.2 lakh crore, aggregate transfers to States is estimated to remain at around 50.9 per cent of the divisible pool during 2021-26 period.

- Total XVFC transfers (devolution + grants) constitutes about 34 per cent of estimated Gross Revenue Receipts of the Union leaving adequate fiscal space for the Union to meet its resource requirements and spending obligations on national development priorities.

### **Horizontal devolution:**

Based on principles of need, equity and performance, overall devolution formula is as follows.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Weight (%)</b>
Population	15.0
Area	15.0
Forest & ecology	10.0
Income distance	45.0
Tax & fiscal efforts	2.5
Demographic performance	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

- On horizontal devolution, while XVFC agreed that the Census 2011 population data better represents the present need of States, to be fair to, as well as reward, the States which have done better on the demographic front, XVFC has assigned a 12.5 per cent weight to the demographic performance criterion.
- XVFC has re-introduced tax effort criterion to reward fiscal performance.

**Revenue deficit grants:** Based on uniform norms of assessing revenues and expenditure of the States and the Union, XVFC has recommended total revenue deficit grants (RDG) of Rs 2,94,514 crore over the award period for seventeen States.

### **Local Governments:**

- The total size of the grant to local governments should be Rs. 4,36,361 crore for the period 2021-26.
- Of these total grants, Rs. 8,000 crore is performance-based grants for incubation of new cities and Rs. 450 crore is for shared municipal services. A sum of Rs. 2,36,805 crore is earmarked for rural local bodies, Rs.1,21,055 crore for urban local bodies and Rs. 70,051 crore for health grants through local governments.
- Urban local bodies have been categorised into two groups, based on population, and different norms have been used for flow of grants to each, based on their specific needs and aspirations. Basic grants are proposed only for cities/towns having a population of less than a million. For Million-Plus cities, 100 per cent of the grants are performance-linked through the Million-Plus Cities Challenge Fund (MCF).

## **Health:**

- XVFC has recommend that health spending by States should be increased to more than 8 per cent of their budget by 2022.
- Given the inter-State disparity in the availability of medical doctors, it is essential to constitute an All India Medical and Health Service as is envisaged under Section 2A of the All-India Services Act, 1951.
- The total grants-in-aid support to the health sector over the award period works out to Rs. 1,06,606 crore, which is 10.3 per cent of the total grants-in-aid recommended by XVFC. The grants for the health sector will be unconditional.
- XVFC has recommend health grants aggregating to Rs. 70,051 crore for urban health and wellness centres (HWCs), building-less sub centre, PHCs, CHCs, block level public health units, support for diagnostic infrastructure for the primary healthcare activities and conversion of rural sub centres and PHCs to HWCs. These grants will be released to the local governments.
- Out of the remaining grant of Rs. 31,755 crore for the health sector (total of Rs. 1,06,606 crore minus Rs. 70, 051 crore through local bodies and Rs.4800 crore state-specific grants), XVFC has recommended Rs. 15,265 crore for critical care hospitals. This includes Rs. 13,367 crore for general States and Rs 1,898 crore for NEH States.
- XVFC has recommended Rs. 13,296 crore for training of the allied healthcare workforce. Out of this, Rs. 1,986 crore will be for NEH States and Rs. 11,310 crore for general States.

## **Performance incentives and grants:**

- XVFC has recommended grants of Rs. 4,800 crore (Rs. 1,200 crore each year) from 2022-23 to 2025-26 for incentivising the States to enhance educational outcomes.
- XVFC has recommended Rs. 6,143 crore for online learning and development of professional courses (medical and engineering) in regional languages (*matribhasha*) for higher education in India.
- XVFC has recommended that Rs. 45,000 crore be kept as performance-based incentive for all the States for carrying out agricultural reforms
  - for amending their land-related laws on the lines of NITI Aayog's model law
  - Incentive-based grants to States that maintain and augment groundwater stock.
  - growth in agricultural exports
  - production of oilseeds, pulses and wood and wood-based products

## **Defence and Internal Security**

- Keeping in view the extant strategic requirements for national defence in the global context, XVFC has, in its approach, re-calibrated the relative shares of Union and States in gross revenue receipts. This will enable the Union to set aside resources for the special funding mechanism that XVFC has proposed.

- The Union Government may constitute in the **Public Account of India, a dedicated non-lapsable fund, Modernisation Fund for Defence and Internal Security (MFDIS)**. The total indicative size of the proposed MFDIS over the period 2021-26 is Rs. 2,38,354 crore.

### **Disaster Risk Management:**

- Mitigation Funds should be set up at both the national and State levels, in line with the provisions of the Disaster Management Act. The Mitigation Fund should be used for those local level and community-based interventions which reduce risks and promote environment-friendly settlements and livelihood practices.
- For SDRMF, XVFC has recommended the total corpus of Rs.1,60,153 crore for States for disaster management for the duration of 2021-26, of which the Union's share is Rs. 1,22,601 crore and States' share is Rs. 37,552 crore.
- XVFC has recommended six earmarked allocations for a total amount of Rs. 11,950 crore for certain priority areas, namely, two under the NDRF (Expansion and Modernisation of Fire Services and Resettlement of Displaced People affected by Erosion) and four under the NDMF (Catalytic Assistance to Twelve Most Drought-prone States, Managing Seismic and Landslide Risks in Ten Hill States, Reducing the Risk of Urban Flooding in Seven Most Populous Cities and Mitigation Measures to Prevent Erosion).

### **Fiscal consolidation**

- Provided range for fiscal deficit and debt path of both the Union and States.
- Additional borrowing room to States based on performance in power sector reforms.
- A threshold amount of annual appropriation should be fixed below which the funding for a CSS may be stopped. Below the stipulated threshold, the administering department should justify the need for the continuation of the scheme. As the life cycle of ongoing schemes has been made co-terminus with the cycle of Finance Commissions, the third-party evaluation of all CSSs should be completed within a stipulated timeframe. The flow of monitoring information should be regular and should include credible information on output and outcome indicators.
- In view of the uncertainty that prevails at the stage that XVFC have done its analysis, as well as the contemporary realities and challenges, we recognise that the FRBM Act needs a major restructuring and recommend that the time-table for defining and achieving debt sustainability may be examined by a **High-powered Inter-governmental Group**. This High-powered Group can craft the new FRBM framework and oversee its implementation. It is important that the Union and State Governments amend their FRBM Acts, based on the recommendations of the Group, so as to ensure that their legislations are consistent with the fiscal sustainability framework put in place. This High-powered Inter-Governmental Group could also be tasked to oversee the implementation of the 15th Finance Commission's diverse recommendations.
- State Governments may explore formation of independent public debt management cells which will chart their borrowing programme efficiently.

## BUDGET 2021-22

Presenting the **first ever digital Union Budget**, Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman stated that **India's fight against COVID-19 continues into 2021** and that this moment in history, when the political, economic, and strategic relations in the post-COVID world are changing, is the **dawn of a new era – one in which India is well-poised to truly be the land of promise and hope.**

### 6 pillars of the Union Budget 2021-22:

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Physical & Financial Capital, and Infrastructure
3. Inclusive Development for Aspirational India
4. Reinvigorating Human Capital
5. Innovation and R&D
6. Minimum Government and Maximum Governance

### 1. Health and Wellbeing

- **Rs. 2,23,846 crore** outlay for *Health and Wellbeing* in BE 2021-22 as against **Rs. 94,452 crore** in BE 2020-21 – an **increase of 137%**
- Focus on strengthening three areas: **Preventive, Curative, and Wellbeing**
- Steps being taken for improving health and wellbeing:

#### Vaccines

- **Rs. 35,000 crore** for **COVID-19 vaccine** in BE 2021-22
- The **Made-in-India Pneumococcal Vaccine** to be rolled out across the country, from present 5 states – **to avert 50,000 child deaths annually**

#### Health Systems

- **Rs. 64,180 crore** outlay over 6 years for **PM AatmaNirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana** – a new centrally sponsored scheme to be launched, in addition to NHM
- Main interventions under PM AatmaNirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana:
  - **National Institution for One Health**
  - 17,788 rural and 11,024 urban Health and Wellness Centers
  - **4 regional National Institutes for Virology**
  - 15 Health Emergency Operation Centers and **2 mobile hospitals**
  - **Integrated public health labs** in all districts and 3382 block public health units in **11 states**
  - **Critical care hospital blocks** in 602 districts and **12 central institutions**
  - Strengthening of the **National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)**, its 5 regional branches and 20 metropolitan health surveillance units
  - Expansion of the **Integrated Health Information Portal** to all States/UTs to connect all public health labs
  - **17 new Public Health Units** and strengthening of 33 existing Public Health Units

- **Regional Research Platform** for WHO South-East Asia Region
- 9 Bio-Safety Level III laboratories

**Nutrition: Mission Poshan 2.0** to be launched:

- To strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach, and outcome
- Merging the Supplementary Nutrition Programme and the Poshan Abhiyan
- Intensified strategy to be adopted to improve nutritional outcomes across 112 Aspirational Districts

### **Universal Coverage of Water Supply**

**Rs. 2,87,000 crore** over 5 years for **Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)** – to be launched with an aim to provide:

- **2.86 crore household tap connections**
- Universal water supply in all 4,378 Urban Local Bodies
- Liquid waste management in 500 AMRUT cities

### **Swachh Bharat, Swasth Bharat**

- **Rs. 1,41,678 crore** over 5 years for **Urban Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0**
- Main interventions under Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) 2.0:
  - Complete **faecal sludge management** and **waste water treatment**
  - **Source segregation** of garbage
  - **Reduction in single-use plastic**
  - **Reduction in air pollution** by effectively managing waste from construction-and-demolition activities
  - **Bio-remediation** of all legacy dump sites

**Clean Air: Rs. 2,217 crore** to tackle air pollution, for **42 urban centers with a million-plus population**

### **Scrapping Policy**

- **Voluntary** vehicle scrapping policy to **phase out old and unfit vehicles**
- **Fitness tests** in automated fitness centres:
  - After **20 years** in case of **personal vehicles**
  - After **15 years** in case of **commercial vehicles**

## **2. Physical and Financial Capital and Infrastructure**

### **Production Linked Incentive scheme (PLI)**

- **Rs. 1.97 lakh crore** in next 5 years for PLI schemes in **13 Sectors**
- To create and nurture **manufacturing global champions** for an **AatmaNirbhar Bharat**

- To help manufacturing companies become an integral part of **global supply chains**, possess core competence and **cutting-edge technology**
- To bring **scale and size** in key sectors
- To provide **jobs to the youth**

## Textiles

**Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA)** scheme, in addition to PLI:

**7 Textile Parks** to be established over 3 years

Textile industry to become **globally competitive**, attract **large investments** and **boost employment generation & exports**

## Infrastructure

**National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** expanded to 7,400 projects:

Around 217 projects worth **Rs. 1.10 lakh crore** completed

Measures in three thrust areas to increase funding for NIP:

1. Creation of institutional structures:
  1.
    1. **Rs. 20,000 crore** to set up and capitalise a **Development Financial Institution(DFI)** – to act as a provider, enabler and catalyst for infrastructure financing
    2. **Rs. 5 lakh crore** lending portfolio to be created under the proposed DFI in 3 years
    3. **Debt Financing** by Foreign Portfolio Investors to be enabled by amending InvITs' and REITs' legislations
1. Big thrust on monetizing assets
  1.
    1. **National Monetization Pipeline** to be launched
    2. Important **asset monetization** measures:

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1. 5 operational toll roads worth **Rs. 5,000 crore** being transferred to the **NHAIInvIT**
2. Transmission assets worth **Rs. 7,000 crore** to be transferred to the **PGCILInvIT**
3. **Dedicated Freight Corridor** assets to be monetized by Railways, for operations and maintenance, after commissioning
4. Next lot of **Airports** to be monetized for operations and management concession
5. Other **core infrastructure assets** to be rolled out under the Asset Monetization Programme:
  1. **Oil and Gas Pipelines** of GAIL, IOCL and HPCL
  2. **AAI Airports** in Tier II and III cities
  3. Other **Railway Infrastructure** Assets
  4. **Warehousing Assets** of CPSEs such as Central Warehousing Corporation and NAFED
  5. **Sports Stadiums**

1.

Enhancing the share of capital expenditure

- **Creation of institutional structures: Infrastructure Financing**
- **Big thrust on monetizing assets**
- **Sharp Increase in Capital Budget**

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1. **Rs. 5.54 lakh crore** capital expenditure in BE 2021-22 – sharp **increase of 34.5%** over Rs. 4.12 lakh crore allocated in BE 2020-21 :
2. Over **Rs. 2 lakh crore** to States and Autonomous Bodies for their Capital Expenditure.
3. Over **Rs. 44,000 crore** for the Department of Economic Affairs to provide for projects/programmes/departments exhibiting good progress on Capital Expenditure

1.

### **Roads and Highways Infrastructure**

- **Rs. 1,18,101 lakh crore**, highest ever outlay, for Ministry of Road Transport and Highways – of which Rs. 1,08,230 crore is for capital
- Under the **Rs. 5.35 lakh crore Bharatmala Pariyojana**, more than 13,000 km length of roads worth Rs. 3.3 lakh crore awarded for construction:

- **3,800 km** have already been constructed
- Another **8,500 km** to be awarded for construction by March 2022
- Additional **11,000 km of national highway corridors** to be completed by March 2022

#### **Economic corridors** being planned:

- **Rs. 1.03 lakh crore** outlay for 3,500 km of NHs in Tamil Nadu
- **Rs. 65,000 crore** investment for 1,100 km of NHs in Kerala
- **Rs. 25,000 crore** for 675 km of NHs in West Bengal
- Over **Rs. 34,000 crore** to be allocated for 1300 km of NHs to be undertaken in next 3 years in Assam, in addition to Rs. 19,000 crore works of NHs currently in progress in the State

#### **Flagship Corridors/Expressways:**

- **Delhi-Mumbai Expressway** – Remaining 260 km to be awarded before 31.3.2021
- **Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway** – 278 km to be initiated in the current FY; construction to begin in 2021-22
- **Kanpur-Lucknow Expressway** – 63 km expressway providing an alternate route to NH 27 to be initiated in 2021-22
- **Delhi-Dehradun economic corridor** – 210 km to be initiated in the current FY; construction to begin in 2021-22
- **Raipur-Vishakhapatnam** – 464 km passing through Chhattisgarh, Odisha and North Andhra Pradesh, to be awarded in the current year; construction to start in 2021-22
- **Chennai-Salem corridor** – 277 km expressway to be awarded and construction to start in 2021-22
- **Amritsar-Jamnagar** – Construction to commence in 2021-22
- **Delhi-Katra** – Construction will commence in 2021-22

#### **Advanced Traffic management system** in all new 4 and 6-lane highways:

- Speed radars
- Variable message signboards
- GPS enabled recovery vans will be installed

1.

#### **Railway Infrastructure**

- **Rs. 1,10,055 crore** for Railways of which Rs. 1,07,100 crore is for capital expenditure
- **National Rail Plan for India (2030):** to create a ‘future ready’ Railway system by 2030
- **100% electrification** of Broad-Gauge routes to be completed by December, 2023
- Broad Gauge Route Kilometers (RKM) electrification to reach 46,000 RKM, i.e. 72% by end of 2021
- Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) and Eastern DFC to be commissioned by June 2022, to bring down the logistic costs – enabling **Make in India strategy**
- Additional initiatives proposed:
  - The Sonnagar-Gomoh Section (263.7 km) of Eastern DFC to be taken up in PPP mode in 2021-22
  - **Future dedicated freight corridor projects –**
    - East Coast corridor from Kharagpur to Vijayawada
    - East-West Corridor from Bhusaval to Kharagpur to Dankuni
    - North-South corridor from Itarsi to Vijayawada

Measures for **passenger convenience and safety:**

- Aesthetically designed **Vista Dome LHB coach on tourist routes** for better travel
- High density network and highly utilized network routes to have an **indigenously developed automatic train protection system**, eliminating train collision due to human error

## Urban Infrastructure

- Raising the share of public transport in urban areas by **expansion of metro rail network** and augmentation of city bus service
- **Rs. 18,000 crore** for a new scheme, to augment public bus transport:
  - Innovative **PPP** models to run more than **20,000 buses**
  - To boost automobile sector, provide fillip to economic growth, create employment opportunities for our youth
- A total of 702 km of conventional metro is operational and another 1,016 km of metro and RRTS is under construction in 27 cities
- ‘**MetroLite**’ and ‘**MetroNeo**’ technologies to provide metro rail systems at much lesser cost with similar experience in Tier-2 cities and peripheral areas of Tier-1 cities.
- Central counterpart funding to:

1.

1. Kochi Metro Railway Phase-II of 11.5 km at a cost of Rs. 1957.05 crore
2. Chennai Metro Railway Phase –II of 118.9 km at a cost of Rs. 63,246 crore
3. Bengaluru Metro Railway Project Phase 2A and 2B of 58.19 km at a cost of Rs. 14,788 crore
4. Nagpur Metro Rail Project Phase-II and Nashik Metro at a cost of Rs. 5,976 crore and Rs. 2,092 crore respectively.

## Power Infrastructure

- 139 Giga Watts of installed capacity and **1.41 lakh circuit km** of transmission lines added, and additional **2.8 crore households** connected in past 6 years
- Consumers to have alternatives to choose the Distribution Company for enhancing competitiveness
- **Rs. 3,05,984 crore** over 5 years for a revamped, reforms-based and result-linked new **power distribution sector scheme**
- A comprehensive **National Hydrogen Energy Mission 2021-22** to be launched

## Ports, Shipping, Waterways

- **Rs. 2,000 crore** worth 7 projects to be offered in **PPP-mode** in FY21-22 for **operation of major ports**
- Indian shipping companies to get **Rs. 1624 crore** worth subsidy support over 5 years in global tenders of Ministries and CPSEs
- To **double the recycling capacity** of around 4.5 Million Light Displacement Tonne (LDT) by 2024; to generate an **additional 1.5 lakh jobs**

## Petroleum & Natural Gas

- Extension of **Ujjwala Scheme** to cover **1 crore more beneficiaries**
- To add **100 more districts** to the City Gas Distribution network in next 3 years
- A **new gas pipeline project in J&K**
- An independent **Gas Transport System Operator** to be set up for facilitation and coordination of booking of common carrier capacity in all-natural gas pipelines on a non-discriminatory open access basis

## Financial Capital

- A single **Securities Markets Code** to be evolved
- Support for development of a **world class Fin-Tech hub at the GIFT-IFSC**
- A new permanent institutional framework to help in development of Bond market by purchasing investment grade debt securities both in stressed and normal times
- Setting up a system of **Regulated Gold Exchanges**: SEBI to be notified as a regulator and Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority to be strengthened
- To develop an **investor charter** as a right of all financial investors
- **Capital infusion of Rs. 1,000 crore** to Solar Energy Corporation of India and **Rs. 1,500 crore** to Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency

**Increasing FDI in Insurance Sector:** To increase the permissible **FDI limit from 49% to 74%** and allow foreign ownership and control with safeguards

**Stressed Asset Resolution:** Asset Reconstruction Company Limited and Asset Management Company to be set up

**Recapitalization of PSBs: Rs. 20,000 crore** in 2021-22 to further consolidate the financial capacity of PSBs

### **Deposit Insurance**

- **Amendments to the DICGC Act, 1961**, to help depositors get an easy and time-bound access to their deposits to the extent of the deposit insurance cover
- Minimum loan size eligible for debt recovery under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (**SARFAESI Act, 2002** proposed to be reduced **from Rs. 50 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh** for NBFCs with minimum asset size of Rs. 100 crore

### **Company Matters**

- To **decriminalize the Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act, 2008**
- **Easing Compliance requirement of Small companies** by revising their definition under Companies Act, 2013 by increasing their thresholds for Paid up capital from “not exceeding Rs. 50 Lakh” to “not exceeding Rs. 2 Crore” and turnover from “not exceeding Rs. 2 Crore” to “not exceeding Rs. 20 Cr”.
- **Promoting start-ups and innovators by incentivizing the incorporation of One Person Companies (OPCs):**
  - Allowing their growth without any restrictions on paid up capital and turnover
  - Allowing their conversion into any other type of company at any time,
  - Reducing the residency limit for an Indian citizen to set up an OPC from 182 days to 120 days and
  - Allowing Non Resident Indians (NRIs) to incorporate OPCs in India.

To ensure **faster resolution of cases** by:

- **Strengthening NCLT** framework
- Implementation of **e-Courts** system
- Introduction of **alternate methods of debt resolution** and special framework for MSMEs

Launch of data analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning driven **MCA21 Version 3.0 in 2021-22**

### **Disinvestment and Strategic Sale**

- **Rs. 1,75,000 crore** estimated receipts from disinvestment in BE 2020-21

- **Strategic disinvestment** of BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans, Neelachal Ispat Nigam limited etc. to be completed in 2021-22.
- Other than IDBI Bank, two Public Sector Banks and one General Insurance company to be privatized
- **IPO of LIC** in 2021-22
- **New policy for Strategic Disinvestment** approved; CPSEs except in four strategic areas to be privatized
- NITI Aayog to work out on the next list of CPSEs to be taken up for strategic disinvestment
- Incentivizing States for disinvestment of their Public Sector Companies, using central funds
- **Special Purpose Vehicle** in the form of a company to monetize idle land
- Introducing a revised mechanism for ensuring **timely closure of sick or loss making CPSEs**

## Government Financial Reforms

- **Treasury Single Account (TSA)** System for Autonomous Bodies to be extended for universal application
- **Separate Administrative Structure** to streamline the 'Ease of Doing Business' for Cooperatives

## Inclusive Development for Aspirational India

### Agriculture

Ensured **MSP at minimum 1.5 times** the cost of production across all commodities.

- **SWAMITVA Scheme** to be extended to all States/UTs, 1.80 lakh property-owners in 1,241 villages have already been provided cards
- **Agricultural credit** target enhanced to **Rs. 16.5 lakh crore** in FY22 – animal husbandry, dairy, and fisheries to be the focus areas
- **Rural Infrastructure Development Fund** to be enhanced to **Rs. 40,000 crore** from Rs. 30,000 crore
- To **double the Micro Irrigation Fund to Rs. 10,000 crore**
- **'Operation Green Scheme'** to be extended to **22 perishable products**, to boost value addition in agriculture and allied products
- Around **1.68 crore farmers** registered and **Rs. 1.14 lakh crore** of trade value carried out through **e-NAMs**; **1,000 more mandis** to be integrated with e-NAM to bring transparency and competitiveness.
- APMCs to get access to the **Agriculture Infrastructure Funds** for augmenting infrastructure facilities

### Fisheries

- Investments to develop modern fishing harbours and fish landing centres – both marine and inland
- **5 major fishing harbours** – Kochi, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Paradip, and Tutuaghata to be developed as hubs of economic activity
- **Multipurpose Seaweed Park** in Tamil Nadu to promote seaweed cultivation

## **Migrant Workers and Labourers**

**One Nation One Ration Card** scheme for beneficiaries to claim rations anywhere in the country – **migrant workers** to benefit the most

- Scheme implementation so far covered 86% of beneficiaries across 32 States and UTs
- Remaining 4 states to be integrated in next few months
- **Portal to collect information** on unorganized labour force, migrant workers especially, to help formulate schemes for them
- Implementation of **4 labour codes** underway
- Social security benefits for gig and platform workers too
- minimum wages and coverage under the Employees State Insurance Corporation applicable for all categories of workers
- Women workers allowed in all categories, including night-shifts with adequate protection
- Compliance burden on employers reduced with single registration and licensing, and online returns

## **Financial Inclusion**

Under **Stand Up India Scheme** for SCs, STs and women,

- Margin money requirement reduced to 15%
- To also include loans for allied agricultural activities

**Rs. 15,700 crore** budget allocation to MSME Sector, more than double of this year's BE

### **1. Reinvigorating Human Capital**

#### **School Education**

- **15,000 schools** to be strengthened by implementing all NEP components. Shall act as exemplar schools in their regions for mentoring others
- **100 new Sainik Schools** to be set up in partnership with NGOs/private schools/states

#### **Higher Education**

- Legislation to be introduced to setup **Higher Education Commission of India** as an umbrella body with 4 separate vehicles for standard-setting, accreditation, regulation, and funding
- Creation of formal umbrella structure to cover all Govt. colleges, universities, research institutions in a city for greater synergy.

Glue grant to implement the same across 9 cities

**Central University** to come up in **Leh** for accessibility of higher education in Ladakh

## Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Welfare

**750 Eklavya model residential schools** in tribal areas:

- Unit cost of each school to be increased to **Rs. 38 crore**
- For hilly and difficult areas, to **Rs. 48 crore**
- Focus on creation of robust infrastructure facilities for tribal students

Revamped **Post Matric Scholarship Scheme** for welfare of SCs

- **Rs. 35,219 crore** enhanced Central Assistance for 6 years till 2025-2026
- **4 crore** SC students to benefit

## Skilling

- Proposed amendment to **Apprenticeship Act** to enhance opportunities for youth
- **Rs. 3000 crore** for realignment of existing **National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)** towards post-education apprenticeship, training of graduates and diploma holders in Engineering
- Initiatives for partnership with other countries in skilling to be taken forward, similar to partnership:
- With UAE to benchmark skill qualifications, assessment, certification, and deployment of certified workforce
- With Japan for a collaborative Training Inter Training Programme (TITP) to transfer of skills, technique and knowledge

### 1. Innovation and R&D

Modalities of **National Research Foundation** announced in July 2019 –

- **Rs. 50,000 crore** outlay over 5 years
- To strengthen overall research ecosystem with focus on national-priority thrust areas
- **Rs. 1,500 crore** for proposed scheme to promote digital modes of payment
- **National Language Translation Mission (NTLM)** to make governance-and-policy related knowledge available in major Indian languages

PSLV-CS51 to be launched by **New Space India Limited (NSIL)** carrying Brazil's Amazonia Satellite and some Indian satellites

- As part of the **Gaganyaan** mission activities:
  - **4 Indian astronauts** being trained on Generic Space Flight aspects, in Russia
  - **First unmanned launch** is slated for **December 2021**
- **Rs. 4,000 crore** over five years for **Deep Ocean Mission** survey exploration and conservation of deep sea biodiversity

#### 1. Minimum Government, Maximum Governance

- Measures being undertaken to bring reforms in Tribunals to ensure speedy justice
- **National Commission for Allied Healthcare Professionals** already introduced to ensure transparent and efficient regulation of the 56 allied healthcare professions
- The **National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill** introduced for the same in nursing profession

Proposed **Conciliation Mechanism** with mandate for quick resolution of contractual disputes with CPSEs

- **Rs. 3,768 crore** allocated for first digital census in the history of India
- **Rs. 300 crore** grant to the Government of Goa for the diamond jubilee celebrations of the state's liberation from Portuguese
- **Rs. 1,000 crore** for the welfare of Tea workers especially women and their children in Assam and West Bengal through a special scheme
- Amendment to FRBM Act proposed to achieve targeted Fiscal Deficit levels
- The Contingency Fund of India is to be augmented from **Rs. 500 crore** to **Rs. 30,000 crore** through Finance Bill

#### Net borrowing of the States:

- Net borrowing for the states allowed at **4% of GSDP for the year 2021-2022** as per recommendation of 15th FC
  - Part of this earmarked for incremental capital expenditure
  - Additional borrowing ceiling of 0.5% of GSDP will be provided subject to conditions
- States expected to reach a **fiscal deficit of 3% of GSDP by 2023-24**, as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission

#### Fifteenth Finance Commission:

- The final report covering **2021-26** was submitted to the President, retaining vertical shares of states at **41%**
- Funds to UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh would be provided by Centre

- On the Commission's recommendation, **Rs. 1,18,452 crore** have been provided as Revenue Deficit Grant to 17 states in 2021-22, as against **Rs. 74,340 crore** to 14 states in 2020-21

## Tax Proposals

Vision of a transparent, efficient tax system to promote investments and employment in the country with **minimum burden on tax payers**

### 1. Direct Taxes

#### Achievements:

- **Corporate tax rate** slashed to make it among the lowest in the world
- Burden of taxation on **small taxpayers** eased by increasing rebates
- Return filers almost **doubled to 6.48 crore** in 2020 from **3.31 crore** in 2014
- **Faceless Assessment** and **Faceless Appeal** introduced

**Relief to Senior Citizens: Exemption from filing tax returns** for senior citizens over 75 years of age and having only pension and interest income; tax to be deducted by paying bank

#### Reducing Disputes, Simplifying Settlement:

- **Time limit for re-opening cases** reduced to **3 years** from 6 years
- **Serious tax evasion cases**, with evidence of concealment of income of Rs. 50 lakh or more in a year, to be re-opened only up to 10 years, with approval of the Principal Chief Commissioner
- **Dispute Resolution Committee** to be set up for taxpayers with taxable income up to Rs. 50 lakh and disputed income up to Rs. 10 lakh
- **National Faceless Income Tax Appellate Tribunal Centre** to be established
- Over **1 lakh taxpayers** opted to settle tax disputes of over Rs. 85,000 crore through **Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme** until 30th January 2021

**Relaxation to NRIs:** Rules to be notified for removing hardships faced by NRIs regarding their foreign retirement accounts

**Incentivising Digital Economy: Limit of turnover for tax audit** increased to **Rs. 10 crore** from Rs. 5 crore for entities carrying out 95% transactions digitally

#### Relief for Dividend:

- Dividend payment to REIT/ InvIT exempt from TDS
- Advance tax liability on dividend income only after declaration/ payment of dividend
- Deduction of tax on dividend income at lower treaty rate for Foreign Portfolio Investors

## Attracting Foreign Investment for Infrastructure:

- **Infrastructure Debt Funds** made eligible to raise funds by issuing **Zero Coupon Bonds**
- Relaxation of some conditions relating to prohibition on private funding, restriction on commercial activities, and direct investment

## Supporting 'Housing for All':

- Additional deduction of interest, up to Rs. 1.5 lakh, for loan taken to buy an affordable house extended for loans taken till March 2022
- **Tax holiday** for Affordable Housing projects extended **till March 2022**
- Tax exemption allowed for notified Affordable Rental Housing Projects

## Tax incentives to IFSC in GIFT City:

- **Tax holiday for capital gains** from incomes of aircraft leasing companies
- Tax exemptions for aircraft lease rentals paid to foreign lessors
- Tax incentive for relocating foreign funds in the IFSC
- Tax exemption to investment division of foreign banks located in IFSC

**Ease of Filing Taxes:** Details of capital gains from listed securities, dividend income, interest from banks, etc. to be pre-filled in returns

**Relief to Small Trusts:** Exemption limit of annual receipt revised from ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore for small charitable trusts running schools and hospitals

## Labour Welfare:

- Late deposit of employee's contribution by the employer not to be allowed as deduction to the employer
- Eligibility for tax holiday claim for start-ups extended by one more year
- **Capital gains exemption** for investment in start-ups extended **till 31st March, 2022**

### 1. Indirect Taxes

**GST:** Measures taken till date:

- Nil return through SMS
- Quarterly return and monthly payment for small taxpayers
- **Electronic invoice system**
- Validated input tax statement
- **Pre-filled editable GST return**
- Staggering of returns filing
- Enhancement of capacity of GSTN system
- Use of **deep analytics** and **AI to identify tax evaders**

## Custom Duty Rationalization:

- **Twin objectives:** Promoting domestic manufacturing and helping India get onto global value chain and export better
- **80 outdated exemptions** already eliminated
- Revised, distortion-free customs duty structure to be put in place from 1st October 2021 by **reviewing more than 400 old exemptions**
- **New customs duty exemptions** to have validity up to the 31st March following two years from its issue date

#### **Electronic and Mobile Phone Industry:**

- Some exemptions on parts of chargers and sub-parts of mobiles withdrawn
- **Duty on some parts of mobiles revised to 2.5% from 'nil' rate**

#### **Iron and Steel:**

- **Customs duty reduced** uniformly to 7.5% on semis, flat, and long products of non-alloy, alloy, and stainless steels
- **Duty on steel scrap exempted** up to 31st March, 2022
- **Anti-Dumping Duty (ADD) and Counter-Veiling Duty (CVD) revoked** on certain steel products
- **Duty on copper scrap reduced** from 5% to 2.5%

**Textiles:** Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on caprolactam, nylon chips and nylon fiber & yarn reduced to 5%

#### **Chemicals:**

- Calibrated customs duty rates on chemicals to encourage domestic value addition and to remove inversions
- **Duty on Naptha reduced** to 2.5%

**Gold and Silver:** Custom duty on gold and silver to be rationalized

#### **Renewable Energy:**

- **Phased manufacturing plan** for solar cells and solar panels to be notified
- **Duty on solar invertors raised** from 5% to **20%**, and on **solar lanterns** from 5% to **15%** to encourage domestic production

#### **Capital Equipment:**

- Tunnel boring machine to now attract a customs duty of 7.5%; and its parts a duty of 2.5%
- Duty on certain auto parts increased to general rate of 15%

#### **MSME Products:**

- Duty on steel screws and plastic builder wares increased to 15%
- Prawn feed to attract customs duty of 15% from earlier rate of 5%

- Exemption on import of duty-free items rationalized to incentivize exporters of garments, leather, and handicraft items
- Exemption on imports of certain kind of leathers withdrawn
- Customs duty on finished synthetic gem stones raised to encourage domestic processing

### **Agriculture Products:**

- Customs duty on cotton increased from nil to 10% and on raw silk and silk yarn from 10% to 15%.
- Withdrawal of end-use based concession on denatured ethyl alcohol
- Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) on a small number of items

### **Rationalization of Procedures and Easing of Compliance:**

- **Turant Customs** initiative, a Faceless, *Paperless*, and *Contactless* Customs measures
- New procedure for administration of Rules of Origin

### **Achievements and Milestones during the COVID-19 pandemic**

- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY):**
  - Valued at **Rs. 2.76 lakh crore**
  - Free food grain to **80 crore people**
  - Free cooking gas for **8 crore families**
  - Direct cash to over **40 crore farmers, women, elderly, the poor and the needy**
- **AatmaNirbhar Bharat package (ANB 1.0):**
  - Estimated at **Rs. 23 lakh crore** – more than **10% of GDP**
- PMGKY, three ANB packages (ANB 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0), and announcements made later were like **5 mini-budgets** in themselves
- **Rs. 27.1 lakh crore** worth of financial impact of all three ANB packages including RBI's measures – amounting to **more than 13% of GDP**
- **Structural reforms:**
  - **One Nation One Ration Card**
  - Agriculture and Labour Reforms
  - Redefinition of MSMEs
  - Commercialisation of the Mineral Sector
  - Privatisation of Public Sector Undertakings
  - Production Linked Incentive Schemes
- **Status of India's fight against COVID-19:**
  - **2 Made-in-India vaccines** – medically safeguarding citizens of India and those of 100-plus countries against COVID-19
  - **2 or more new vaccines expected soon**
  - **Lowest death rate per million** and the lowest active cases

## 2021 – Year of milestones for Indian history

- **75th year of India's independence**
- 60 years of Goa's accession to India
- 50 years of the 1971 India-Pakistan War
- Year of the **8th Census** of Independent India
- India's turn at the **BRICS Presidency**
- Year for **Chandrayaan-3 Mission**
- **Haridwar MahaKumbh**

## Vision for AatmaNirbhar Bharat

- **AatmaNirbharta** – not a new idea – ancient India was self-reliant and a business epicentre of the world
- AtmaNirbhar Bharat – an expression of 130 crore Indians who have full confidence in their capabilities and skills
- Strengthening the **Sankalp** of:
  - Nation First
  - Doubling Farmer's Income
  - Strong Infrastructure
  - Healthy India
  - Good Governance
  - Opportunities for Youth
  - Education for All
  - Women Empowerment
  - Inclusive Development
- 13 promises made in the Union Budget 2015-16, and resonating with the vision of AatmaNirbharta, to materialise during the **AmrutMahotsav of 2022** – on the 75th year of our independence

## Prelims-oriented Scheme

### World Wetlands Day: 2nd Feb

- India gets its first Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM), as a part of the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM). It would address specific research needs and knowledge gaps and will aid in the application of integrated approaches for conservation, management and wise use of the wetlands.
- India has nearly 4.6% of its land as wetlands, covering an area of 15.26 million hectares and has 42 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites), with a surface area of 1.08 million hectares. The year 2021 also commemorates the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, celebrated annually as World Wetlands Day.

## Launch of Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA) scheme

- To make Indian textile industry globally competitive
- Attract large investments
- Boost employment generation and exports

This will create world class infrastructure with plug and play facilities to enable create global champions in exports. MITRA will be launched in addition to the Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI).

### **MoU signed with 21 States/UTs for better functioning of Eklavya Model Residential Schools**

The signing of the MoU is the first step towards positioning of EMRSs as harbinger of tribal education in the remote tribal hinterlands and it would bring all States on a uniform and mutually agreed platform.

- EMRSs are a flagship intervention of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to provide quality education to tribal students in remote tribal areas. The programme being implemented since 1998 have created a niche in the tribal education landscape of the country.
- However, the scheme was revamped in 2018 to improve the geographical outreach of the programme and introduce several qualitative changes to improve learning outcomes in the schools.
- Currently there are 588 schools sanctioned across the country in 28 States/UT with around 73391 students enrolled in the Schools. Another 152 schools shall be sanctioned by the year 2022.

### ***National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS)***

- NESTS was established in April, 2019 as an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to run and manage the schools.
- Ever since then, In order to ensure adequate availability of financial resources in the schools, the recurring cost per annum per student was enhanced to Rs. 1,09,000.00 in 2018-19 from the existing unit cost of Rs. 61,500.00 in 2017-18.
- With the increase in recurring cost and the construction grant it was imperative that the qualitative improvements in the running and management of the schools are initiated simultaneously.
- With the execution of MoU, the schools shall be eligible for higher recurring costs so as to ensure qualitative improvements in the schools.

### **6 New Circles of Archaeological Survey of India created**

1. Rajkot Circle, Gujarat – by bifurcation of Vadodara Circle.
2. Jabalpur Circle, Madhya Pradesh – by bifurcation of Bhopal Circle.
3. Tiruchirappalli (Trichy) Circle, Tamil Nadu – by bifurcation of Chennai & Thrissur Circle.
4. Meerut Circle, Uttar Pradesh – by bifurcation of Agra circle
5. Jhansi Circle, Uttar Pradesh – by bifurcation of Lucknow Circle.
6. Raiganj Circle, West Bengal – by bifurcation of Kolkata Circle.

**One District One Product Scheme:** It is an initiative which is seen as a transformational step forward towards realizing the true potential of a district, fuel economic growth and generate employment and rural entrepreneurship, taking us to the goal of AtmaNirbhar Bharat.

**One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is operationally merged with ‘Districts as Export Hub’ initiative being implemented by DGFT, Department of Commerce, with Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) as a major stakeholder.**

The objective is to convert each District of the country into an Export Hub by identifying products with export potential in the District, addressing bottlenecks for exporting these products, supporting local exporters/manufacturers to scale up manufacturing, and find potential buyers outside India with the aim of promoting exports, promoting manufacturing & services industry in the District and generate employment in the District.

### **India to host Indian Ocean Region Defence Ministers’ Conclave on the sidelines of Aero India 2021**

- On February 04, 2021 on the margins of Aero India 2021 – Asia’s largest Aero show
- The broad theme of the conclave will be ‘Enhanced Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Indian Ocean’.
- The conclave is an initiative to promote dialogue in an institutional, economic and cooperative environment that can foster the development of peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region. The conclave would address aspects related to Defence Industry co-operation amongst participating countries, sharing of resources available in Indian defence shipyards for design & shipbuilding, Indian Ports with friendly countries, Information-sharing towards increased maritime domain awareness, maritime surveillance and co-operation, Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR), Marine Pollution Response activities, Development of technologies and capabilities for harnessing marine resources, etc.

**Preliminary survey shows deposits of Lithium in Mandya district of Karnataka:** Presence of Lithium resources of 1,600 tonnes (inferred category) in the pegmatites of Marlagalla – Allapatna area, Mandya district, Karnataka

- Lithium is a key element for new technologies and finds its use in ceramics, glass, telecommunication and aerospace industries.
- The well-known uses of Lithium are in Lithium ion batteries, lubricating grease, high energy additive to rocket propellants, optical modulators for mobile phones and as convertor to tritium used as a raw material for thermonuclear reactions i.e. fusion.

**The thermonuclear application makes Lithium as “Prescribed substance” under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 which permits AMD for exploration of Lithium in various geological domains of the country. Due to the continuously increasing demand of Lithium ion batteries, the requirement of Lithium has increased over last few years.**

#### **Key steps taken by Government to increase exports:**

1. Foreign Trade Policy (2015-20) extended by one year i.e. upto 31-3-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation.
2. Interest Equalization Scheme on pre and post shipment rupee export credit has also been extended by one year i.e. upto 31-3-2021.
3. A new Scheme, Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP), has been launched with effect from 01.01.2021.
4. Common Digital Platform for Certificate of Origin has been launched to facilitate trade and increase FTA utilization by exporters.
5. A comprehensive “Agriculture Export Policy” to provide an impetus to agricultural exports related to agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries and food processing sectors is under implementation.
6. Promoting and diversifying services exports by pursuing specific action plans for the 12 Champion Services Sectors.
7. Promoting districts as export hubs by identifying products with export potential in each district, addressing bottlenecks for exporting these products and supporting local exporters/manufacturers to generate employment in the district.
8. Active role of Indian missions abroad towards promoting India’s trade, tourism, technology and investment goals has been enhanced.
9. Package announced in light of the covid pandemic to support domestic industry through various banking and financial sector relief measures, especially for MSMEs, which constitute a major share in exports.

#### **Ethanol as an alternate fuel**

- Government has been promoting use of ethanol as a blend stock with main automotive fuel like petrol in line with the National Policy on Biofuels (NBP) -2018 under the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme. This policy envisages an indicative target of blending 20% ethanol in petrol by 2030.
- Government has since allowed production of ethanol from sugarcane and food grain based raw-materials.
- The cost of production of ethanol varies from distillery to distillery and depends upon various factors viz. cost of raw material, conversion cost, efficiency of distillery plants etc.
- Further, keeping in view the above factors, the Government has fixed the ex-mill price of ethanol from sugarcane based raw-materials, and Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have fixed the price of ethanol from damaged and surplus rice with FCI for Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) (period from Dec. to Nov.) 2020-21

#### **Launch of Unified Portal of Gobardhan**

**Aim:** To promote Gobardhan scheme and track real time progress

- Under the new unified approach, all these programmes/schemes will be coordinated by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation under the Swachh Bharat Mission – Grameen (SBMG).
- Unified Gobardhan portal will ensure close coordination with stakeholder Departments/Ministries for smooth implementation of Biogas schemes/initiatives and its real time tracking.

**Launch of Kalam Program for Intellectual Property Literacy and Awareness Campaign (KAPILA):** The objectives of the scheme include creating awareness regarding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), enabling of IP protection of inventions originating from faculty and students of HEIs, development of Credit Course on IPR, training program on IPR for faculty and students of HEIs and sensitization and development of vibrant IP filing system. So far, total 46,556 users have been registered for KAPILA.

**‘Chauri Chaura’ Centenary Celebrations:** The day marks 100 years of the ‘Chauri Chaura’ incident, a landmark event in India’s fight for independence.

- The Chauri Chaura incident took place on 4 February 1922 at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district of the United Province (modern Uttar Pradesh) in British India.
- In this, a large group of protesters participating in the Non-cooperation movement, clashed with police who opened fire.
- In retaliation the demonstrators attacked and set fire to a police station, killing all of its occupants.
- The incident led to the death of three civilians and 22 policemen.
- Mahatma Gandhi, who was strictly against violence, halted the non-co-operation movement on the national level on 12 February 1922, as a direct result of this incident.

### **Maternal Mortality Ratio**

A Task Force had been constituted by the Government to examine the correlation of age of marriage and motherhood with

- (i) Health, medical well-being and nutritional status of mother and neonate/ infant/ child, during pregnancy, birth and thereafter,
- (ii) Key parameters like Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Total Fertility Rate (TFR), Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB), Child Sex Ratio (CSR) etc. and
- (iii) Any other relevant points pertaining to health and nutrition in this context.

**1st India-EU High Level Dialogue on Trade and Investment:** Commitment to the establishment of this Dialogue was a major outcome of the 15th India-EU Leader’s Summit held in July 2020, with an objective for a Ministerial level guidance towards the bilateral trade and investment relations.

- The Ministers emphasized the importance of global cooperation and solidarity in a post COVID-19 era and agreed for further deepening of bilateral trade and investment relationship through a series of regular engagements, aiming at quick deliverable for the businesses in these tough times.
- Agreed to meet within the next three months, with an objective for reaching consensus on a host of bilateral trade & investment cooperation issues viz. a bilateral Regulatory Dialogue; an India-EU Multilateral Dialogue to explore further possibilities of cooperation; etc.
- In a significant step forward, regular interactions for re-initiation of bilateral trade and investment agreements, with an interim agreement, to start with, were also discussed

**Avalanche in Chamoli, Uttarakhand:** Uttarakhand's Chamoli district experienced avalanche and massive flooding on February 7 after a portion of the Nanda Devi glacier broke off causing overflow of the Alaknanda river system — consisting of the Alaknanda river, the Dhauli Ganga and the Rishi Ganga — all tributaries of the Ganga.

The sudden floods washed away hydroelectric stations — the Rishi Ganga Hydel Project (Raini) and NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad Hydel project (Tapovan) — on the river system

- 10 locals, including shepherds with their 180 sheep and goats were swept away in the flash flood.
- Around 143 people were missing, but the number could be higher. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and other agencies are carrying out rescue operations on a war footing in the affected areas.
- A 'glacial burst' is widely considered the cause (also the cause of the 2013 Uttarakhand floods), with a close second reason being a possible cloudburst. However, the incident was 'quite peculiar' due to no reported snow or rain on the day of the incident.
- Another explanation is climate change, with increasing "thermal profile of ice" which has gone from -6 to -20C to -2C, thus making it more susceptible to melt.



# PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (PIB) IAS UPSC – 8th February to 13th February – 2021

 [iasbaba.com/2021/02/press-information-bureau-pib-ias-upsc-8th-february-to-13th-february-2021](https://iasbaba.com/2021/02/press-information-bureau-pib-ias-upsc-8th-february-to-13th-february-2021)

Date February 22, 2021

## ARCHIVES

### GS-2

#### Table of Contents

- [GS-2](#)
- [National Monsoon Mission](#)
- [Signing ceremony of MoU for the construction of the Lalandar “Shatoot” Dam in Afghanistan](#)
- [World Bank Signs Project to Support Nutrition-Supportive Agriculture in Tribal-Dominated Areas of Chhattisgarh](#)
- [MoU with Japan on training of skilled workers](#)
- [GS-3](#)
- [Agri Logistics Systems in the Country](#)
- [Study shows significant reduction of heavy metal pollution during COVID-19 pandemic in the Ganga water](#)
- [Indian astronomers detect huge optical flare in one of the oldest astronomic objects](#)
- [Scientists find geological evidence of eastern Himalaya earthquake recorded in history](#)

### National Monsoon Mission

***(Topic: Government policies and schemes)***

**Objective:** To improve the monsoon prediction over India on all time scales and hence it is implemented for the whole country which includes all the States and UTs.

#### *Targets*

- Development of a seamless prediction system using monsoon mission model, on different time scales, like Seasonal (for whole Monsoon season), Extended range (up-to 4 weeks), Short range prediction (up-to 5days).
- Initiate and coordinate working partnership between Indian and foreign institutes to develop a system for prediction of extremes and climate applications
- Develop and implement system for climate applications having social impacts (such as agriculture, flood forecast, extreme events forecast, wind energy, etc.)

- Advanced data assimilation system for preparing high quality data for model predictions.

*Major achievements of NMM during the last three years are:*

- Setting up of an advanced prediction system for Seasonal prediction; Extended range prediction and Very high-resolution Short-range prediction.
- Commissioning of a Global Ensemble Forecast System (GEFS) for short and medium range prediction at 12km.
- A remarkable improvement in the skill of the forecasts especially in the short to medium range has been noticed.
- The Cyclone track and intensity prediction has also shown a steady improvement over the last three years.
- The operationalization of Monsoon Mission dynamical model (MMCFS) to prepare operational seasonal forecast of monsoon rainfall and temperatures during the hot and cold weather seasons over India.
- Use of MMCFS and extended range prediction system for preparing regional seasonal forecast outlook for south Asia under WMO recognised Regional Climate Center and South Asia Seasonal Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) activities.
- Development of an algorithm to monitor and predict the Monsoon Intra-seasonal Oscillations (MISO) and Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) on the extended range.
- Development of an index to predict the genesis and evolution of tropical cyclones and other cyclonic disturbances over the north Indian Ocean.
- Probabilistic Quantitative Precipitation Forecast over all the Indian river basin have been operationally implemented.
- Probabilistic (percentile based) forecast for extreme wind, precipitation have been established.
- GFS/GEFS forecasts have been extensively used to provide guidance to Forest fire possibility and also to Renewable Energy Sectors namely, wind and solar.
- Development of a high resolution regional re-analysis product, IMDAA at very high resolution of 12km.
- Several scientists have been trained for modelling & forecasts through Monsoon Mission Program and capacity building activities have been done through targeted trainings.

### **Atmosphere and Climate Research – Modelling, Observing Systems and Services (ACROSS):**

**Objective: To conduct R & D for improving forecast of weather, climate and other hazardous events in real-time for delivery of a reliable weather and climate service.**

- The entire gamut of weather/climate prediction involves assimilation of meteorological observations, understanding the processes, research and development of dynamical models and providing the forecast services.

- Each of these aspects is incorporated as sub-scheme under the umbrella scheme “ACROSS” and is being implemented through India Meteorological Department (IMD), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting(NCMRWF).
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## **Signing ceremony of MoU for the construction of the Lalandar “Shatoot” Dam in Afghanistan**

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### ***(Topic: India and its neighbours)***

The project is a part of the New Development Partnership between India and Afghanistan.

The Lalander [Shatoot] Dam would meet the safe drinking water needs of Kabul City, provide irrigation water to nearby areas, rehabilitate the existing irrigation and drainage network, aid in flood protection and management efforts in the area, and also provide electricity to the region.

This is the second major dam being built by India in Afghanistan, after the India-Afghanistan Friendship Dam [Salma Dam], which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister and the President in June 2016.

Signing of the MoU on Lalandar [Shatoot] Dam is a reflection of India’s strong and long-term commitment towards the socio-economic development of Afghanistan and the enduring partnership between our two countries. As a part of our Development Cooperation with Afghanistan, India has completed more than 400 projects covering all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

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## **World Bank Signs Project to Support Nutrition-Supportive Agriculture in Tribal-Dominated Areas of Chhattisgarh**

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### ***(Topic: International organisations)***

The Government of India, the Government of Chhattisgarh and the World Bank signed a \$100 million project to develop sustainable production systems that allow tribal households in remote areas of Chhattisgarh to practice round-the-year production of diversified and nutritious food.

- CHIRAAG – Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth Project will be implemented in the southern tribal-majority region of the state where a large population is undernourished and poor.
- The project will benefit over 180,000 households from about 1,000 villages in eight districts of Chhattisgarh.

- To make agriculture nutrition supportive, the project will implement a series of activities that are climate resilient and profitable. Investments will be made in water-harvesting structures and irrigation facilities; integrated farming systems blending crops, fishery and livestock production; climate-smart production technologies and practices; developing value chains to ensure that surplus commodities reach profitable markets; and in making nutritious food available to tribal households.

Chhattisgarh's rich biodiversity and diverse agro-climatic zones provide an opportunity to focus on an alternative model of development allowing the tribal-dominated southern region to leverage its natural resources, diversify and grow resilient crops; and assure a production system that takes care of the nutritional needs of every household.

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## MoU with Japan on training of skilled workers

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### *(Topic: India and Japan)*

The Government of India and The Government of Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in January, 2021 on a basic framework for partnership for proper operation of the system pertaining to "Specified Skilled Worker". Under this MoC, skilled Indian workers from fourteen sectors viz. nursing care; building cleaning; material processing industry; industrial machinery manufacturing industry; electric and electronic information related industry; construction; shipbuilding and ship-related industry; automobile maintenance; aviation; lodging; agriculture; fisheries; food and beverages manufacturing industry and food service industry have been identified for enhanced job opportunities for skilled Indian workers in Japan.

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## GS-3

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## Agri Logistics Systems in the Country

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### *(Topic: Agriculture)*

In order to synchronise the demand and supply, the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW) has been encouraging diversified production of crops such as pulses, coarse cereals, nutri cereals, commercial crops, oilseeds etc. under National Food Security Mission (NFSM). Assistance is being provided for various interventions like different types of demonstrations on latest crops production technologies, promotion of newly released High Yielding Varieties (HYVs)/Hybrids, climate resilient varieties/ stress tolerant/bio-fortified varieties, Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) & Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques, water conservation devices, improved farm implements/tools and capacity building of farmers etc., through state governments.

- Horticultural crops are promoted under Mission for **Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)**.

- To maintain the supply chain and support to the farmers in selling their perishable produce, Government has also rolled out a scheme “**Creation of Integrated supply chain for Fruits and vegetables in Major cities**” during 2020-21.
- **Crop Diversification Programme (CDP)**, a sub scheme of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), is being implemented in original green revolution states viz. Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh to diversify paddy area towards alternative crops and shifting of tobacco farming to alternative crops/cropping system in tobacco growing states.
- To support organic farming through **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)** and to support the creation of a **unified national agriculture market** to boost the income of farmers.
- Further, to mitigate risk in the agriculture sector, a scheme “**Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana**” (**PMFBY**) was also launched in 2016.

Government has taken several steps with adequate budgetary provisions to develop robust and integrated agri logistics systems in the country for transportation of agri-produce.

- Government of India has launched “Kisan Rath” mobile application to facilitate the Farmers, Farmers Produce Organisations (FPOs) and Traders in hiring vehicles for transportation of agri-produce. This mobile application is also integrated with National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) portal for facilitating load requests of traders registered in e-NAM portal.
- Further, as per the details received from Ministry of Railways, Indian Railways have operated 208 Kisan Rail Services on 24 routes for transportation of fruits, vegetables and other perishables.
- Further, in order to facilitate storage of perishables, temperature controlled Perishable Cargo Centres have been established at Nashik, Singur, New Azadpur, Raja Ka Talab/Varanasi, Ghazipur and Fatuha. In addition, cold storage Reefer Park has been developed at Inland Container Depot, Dadri and a cold storage facility has been established at Rai, Sonipat.

Policy, regulatory and legal framework has been strengthened through the measures and initiatives envisaged in the National Civil Aviation Policy 2016, the National Air Cargo Policy Outline 2019, and the Krishi Udaan Scheme. Institutionally, the AAI Cargo Logistics and Allied Services Company Limited (AAICLAS) has been set up as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Airports Authority of India (AAI) in 2016 for business development of air cargo, logistics and allied services at various airports. Airports, including cargo terminals, and cold chain facilities and warehouses, have been included in the harmonised list of Infrastructure for fiscal support. Cold storage facilities are available at 28 airports operated by AAICLAS, besides at every JV airport. The world’s largest and uniquely segregated Cold Facility for agri and pharma products was launched at Mumbai Airport on 19 February 2020.

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**Study shows significant reduction of heavy metal pollution during COVID-19 pandemic in the Ganga water**

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### ***(Topic: Environment)***

Efforts to minimize industrial wastewater can substantially reduce heavy metal pollution in the Ganga water in a short time span of a few months, a study carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown.

**By:** A team of scientists from Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur; to quantify the impact of restricted anthropogenic activities on the water chemistry resilience of large rivers.

They analyzed the daily geochemical record of the Ganga River and showed that reduced industrial discharge during 51 days of mandated nationwide lockdown decreased the dissolved heavy metal concentrations by a minimum of 50%. In contrast, inputs from agricultural runoff and domestic sewage like nitrate and phosphate remained almost the same as these sources were not impacted by the nationwide confinement.

The study, which adds to the body of research world's large rivers have been intensely studied to better understand the impact of climate change and direct human interventions on river water quality and quantity has found place in the cover page of the journal.

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### **Indian astronomers detect huge optical flare in one of the oldest astronomic objects**

#### ***(Topic: Space and technology)***

Indian Astronomers have reported one of the strongest flares from a feeding supermassive black hole or blazar called **BL Lacertae**. Analysis of the flare from this blazar, one of the oldest astronomical objects, can help trace the **mass of the black hole** and the source of this emission. Such analysis can provide a lead to probe into mysteries and trace events at different stages of evolution of the Universe.

Blazars or feeding supermassive black holes in the heart of distant galaxies receive a lot of attention from the astronomical community because of their complicated emission mechanism. They emit **jets of charged particles traveling nearly at the speed of light** and are one of the most luminous and energetic objects in the Universe.

BL Lacertae blazar is 10 million light-years away and is among the 50 most prominent blazars that can be observed with the help of a relatively small telescope. It was among the 3 to 4 blazars that was predicted to be experiencing flares by the Whole Earth Blazar Telescope (WEBT), an international consortium of astronomers.

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### **Scientists find geological evidence of eastern Himalaya earthquake recorded in history**

#### ***(Topic: Science and Technology)***

Scientists have found the **first geological evidence of an earthquake at Himebasti Village on the border of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh**, documented by historians as **Sadiya earthquake** in history, which is recorded to have caused massive destruction in the region and almost destroyed the town in 1697 CE.

This finding could contribute to a seismic hazard map of the eastern Himalaya, which can facilitate construction and planning in the region.

Historical archives refer to often recurring earthquakes along the Eastern Himalaya for which geological evidence is lacking, raising the question of whether these events ruptured the surface or remained blind and how they contribute to the seismic budget of the region, which is home to millions of inhabitants.

They found the first geological surface rupture signatures in the form of exposed deposits associated with rivers and streams deformed by a thrust fault along a Northeast dipping fault zone. In order to constrain the causative faulting event at this site, the team dated twenty-one radiocarbon samples from the trench exposure.

They also found large tree trunks embedded in the youngest flood deposits at the exit of the **Subansiri River** (Sadiya town is located roughly 145 km southeast of Subansiri river), suggesting the post-seismic aggradation of the river following an array of aftershocks till six months in an abortive fashion.

The study of the earthquake at Sadiya standing on a grassy plain, almost surrounded by forested Eastern Himalayas on the **right bank of Lohit River**, adds an important site to the seismic hazard assessment of the eastern Himalaya, which will benefit the inhabitants and help in providing better infrastructure across the Eastern Himalayan foothills which is one of the most densely populated regions in the world.

### **Prelims oriented news**

**World Radio Day:** 12th Feb

**Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR):** As per the Sample Registration System (SRS) report by Registrar General of India (RGI) for the last three years, Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of India has reduced from 130 per 100,000 live births in SRS 2014-16 to 122 in SRS 2015-17 and to 113 per 100,000 live births in SRS 2016-18.

### **State to complete Urban Local Bodies (ULB) reforms**

- Andhra Pradesh
- Madhya Pradesh
- Manipur
- Rajasthan
- Telangana
- Goa

**SAKSHAM (Shramik Shakti Manch)**- a dynamic job portal for mapping the skills of Shramiks vis-à-vis requirements of MSMEs and a Seaweed Mission for commercial farming of seaweeds and its processing for value addition. The portal with the demand and supply data uses algorithm and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, for geo spatial information on demand and availability of Shramiks, and also provide analysis on skill training programmes of Shramiks. The pilot portal originally initiated with two districts is now being launched as an all India portal.

- A dynamic job portal – opportunity for Shramiks and MSMEs
- Facilitate creation of 10 lakh blue collar jobs
- Direct connect between Shramiks and MSMEs, no middleman in between
- Minimise migration of Shramiks – job opportunity in proximate MSMEs

**SANKALP (Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion)** is a World Bank loan assisted programme to strengthen the district skill administration and the District Skill Committees (DSCs). The two-year academic programme comes with an in-built component of on-ground practical experience with the district administration. The fellows under MGNF will acquire academic expertise and technical competency in understanding the overall skill ecosystem along with being attached to DSCs and help them manage the skill development planning at district level through the mechanism of formulating District Skill Development Plans (DSDPs).

### **Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (Samarth)**

Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SAMARTH) was approved towards addressing the skill gap in textile sector and also to supplement the efforts of textile industry in providing gainful and sustainable employment to the youth. The objectives of Samarth are as follows:

- To provide demand driven, placement oriented National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant skilling programmes to incentivize and supplement the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organized textile and related sectors, covering the entire value chain of textiles, excluding Spinning and Weaving
- To promote skilling and skill upgradation in the traditional sectors of handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture and jute
- To enable provision of sustainable livelihood either by wage or self-employment to all sections of the society across the country

### **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**

- Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana, or PMVVY, is a social security scheme for senior citizens.
- It is implemented through the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).
- This gives an assured minimum pension.

**The Anganwadi Services** {under Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme}

- Envisages the Anganwadi Workers & Helpers as honorary workers from local community who come forward to render their services, on part time basis, in the area of child care and development. Being honorarium workers, they are paid monthly honoraria as decided by Government from time to time.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan empowers the frontline functionaries i.e. Anganwadi Workers and Lady Supervisors by providing them with smart phones. ICDS-Common Application Software /(ICDS-CAS) have been developed under POSHAN Abhiyaan which enables data capture, ensures assigned service delivery and prompts for interventions wherever required. It enables collection of information on ICDS service delivery interventions and its impact on nutrition outcomes in beneficiaries.

## **National Creche Scheme**

Ministry of Women and Child Development implements the National Crèche Scheme for the children of working mothers to provide day care facilities to children (age group of 6 months to 6 years) of working mothers. The Scheme provides an integrated package of the following services:

1. Day care facilities including sleeping facilities.
2. Early stimulation for children below 3 years and pre-school education for 3 to 6 years old children
3. Supplementary nutrition (to be locally sourced)
4. Growth monitoring
5. Health check-up and immunization

## **Some of the steps taken by the Government for increasing the participation of women in the economy:**

**Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme:** The scheme aims to facilitate inter-sectoral convergence of schemes and programs meant for empowerment of women both at the central and State/UT level.

**SwadharGreh Scheme:** The Scheme caters to women victims of unfortunate circumstances in need of institutional support for rehabilitation, so that they can lead their life with dignity.

**Ujjawala Scheme:** It is a comprehensive scheme for prevention of trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, as well as for facilitating rescue, rehabilitation and re-integration of victims in to their families and society as needed.

**Working Women's Hostel Scheme:** This scheme promotes availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with day care facility for their children, wherever possible, in urban, semi-urban, and even rural areas, where employment opportunities for women exist.

**Anganwadi Services:** The Scheme envisages setting up of Anganwadi centers across the country for children and caters to the pre-school education, nutrition of children and lactating mothers.

**POSHAN Abhiyan: The scheme aims to reduce mal-nutrition/ under nutrition, among young children and women from the country in a phased manner.**

**Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) Scheme:** The Scheme provides cash incentives amounting to Rs.5000 in 3 installments to pregnant and lactating mothers.

**BetiBachaoBetiPadhao (BBBP):** Objective of the scheme is to celebrate the girl child by preventing gender biased sex selective elimination, ensuring survival protection, education, and participation.

**Home for Widows:** A Home for Widows has been set up in Vrindavan, UP to provide widows a safe and secure place to stay and live their lives with dignity.

**Tribal Artisan Day:** 7th February

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) under the M/o Tribal Affairs, as the nodal agency working towards tribal empowerment.

- **Warli Art:** The Warli or Varli are an indigenous tribe (Adivasi) of western India, living in mountainous as well as coastal areas along the Maharashtra-Gujarat border and surrounding areas. Warli Painting is registered with a Geographical Indication under the intellectual property rights act.
- **Pattachitra or Patachitra** is a general term for traditional, cloth-based scroll painting,[5] based in the eastern Indian states of Odisha and West Bengal. Pattachitras are a component of an ancient Bengali narrative art, originally serving as a visual device during the performance of a song.
- **The Wancho** are indigenous people inhabiting the Patkai hills of Longding district in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

**National Research Centre for Makhana:** In Darbhanga (Bihar); Darbhanga in particular and Mithila in general is major Makhana producing region in the country.

**Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)**

- **Aim:** To boost the farm mechanization in the country; The scheme aims at 'reaching the unreached' by making farm machines accessible and affordable for the small and marginal farmers (SMFs) through establishment of Custom Hiring Centers(CHCs) , creating Hubs for hi-tech & high value farm equipment and Farm Machinery Banks.
- Distribution of various subsidized agricultural equipment and machines to individual farmer is also one of the activities under the scheme.

- Purchasing of farm machines for SMFs is not financially feasible therefore custom hiring institution provide for hiring option of machines to SMFs.
- Creating awareness among stakeholders through demonstration of machine operations and skill development of farmers and youth and others are also the components of SMAM.

**The performance testing and certification of machines at designated testing centers located all over the country are ensuring farm machinery qualitatively, effectively and efficiently.**

### **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) mission**

- The scheme seeks to provide portability of food security benefits all across the nation.
- Families who have food security cards can buy subsidized rice and wheat from any ration shop in these states.
- Their ration cards should be linked with Aadhar Number to avail this service.
- The Centre is intended to extend the programme to all states by August next year so that the portability of the food security card implemented.
- The national portability of ration cards will ensure all beneficiaries especially the migrants in getting access to PDS across the nation from any PDS shop of their own choice

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### **Malabar Naval Exercises:**

- The Malabar series of exercises began as an annual bilateral naval exercise between India and the US in 1992. Japan joined the Naval Exercises in 2015. Malabar 2020 saw the participation of the Australian Navy also.
- The Malabar Naval exercises enhanced synergy, interoperability and coordination between the four country navies. The exercises highlight the convergence of views among the participating countries on maritime issues and their shared commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and a rules-based international order.

### **Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India:** By the Ministry of Culture

- **Objective:** Reinvigorating and revitalizing various institutions, groups, individuals, identified non-MOC institutions, non-Government organisations, researchers and scholars so that they may engage in activities/ projects for strengthening, protecting, preserving and promoting the rich Intangible Cultural Heritage of India.
- Assistance under the scheme is provided in the form of non-recurring grants, honoraria etc. with a view to address areas critical for the survival and propagation of all forms of ICH.
- Moreover, India has successfully inscribed 13 ICH elements in the UNESCO Representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity under the 2003 Convention.

**The National list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India:** It is an attempt to recognize the diversity of Indian Culture embedded in its Intangible Heritage. It aims to raise awareness about the various Intangible Cultural Heritage elements from different states of India at National and International level and ensure their protection.

Following UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, this list has been classified into five broad domains in which Intangible Cultural Heritage is manifested:

1. Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
2. Performing Arts
3. Social practices, Rituals and Festive events
4. Knowledge and practices concerning Nature and the Universe
5. Traditional Craftsmanship

### **World Sustainable Development Summit 2021**

- **Theme:** 'Redefining our common future: Safe and secure environment for all'
- The 20th edition of **The Energy and Resources Institute's (TERI)** flagship event, the World Sustainable Development Summit, will be held online.
- The Summit will bring together a wide number of governments, business leaders, academicians, climate scientists, youth, and the civil society in the fight against climate change.
- India's Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Ministry of Earth Sciences are key partners of the Summit.
- Energy and industry transition, adaptation and resilience, nature based solutions, climate finance, circular economy, clean oceans and air pollution, are amongst the range of topics to be discussed during the Summit.

### **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan**

- Government of India has launched Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA) of 125 days on 20th June, 2020 with a resource envelop of Rs.50,000 crore, to boost employment and livelihood opportunities for returnee migrant workers and similarly affected citizens in rural area, in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.
- The objectives of the Abhiyaan were to provide immediate employment & livelihood opportunities to the distressed, to saturate the villages with public infrastructure and creation of livelihood assets to boost the income generation activities and enhance long term livelihood opportunities by giving focus on 25 works in 116 selected districts across 6 States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- A total of 12 Ministries/Departments of Government of India had participated in the Abhiyaan.
- A total of 50.78 Crore Person days employment has been generated during the Abhiyaan.

## Setting up of Migration Commission

- NITI Aayog has constituted a sub-group to prepare a National Action Plan for Migrant Workers.
- The sub-group comprises the members from various Ministries of Govt. of India, subject experts, NGOs and civil society organisations, to prepare a tangible action plan to address issues related to migrant workers.
- In order to safeguard the interest of the migrant workers, the Central Government had enacted the **Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979**. This Act has now been subsumed in the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.
- The above mentioned code, commonly known as OSH Code, provides for decent working conditions, minimum wages, grievances redressal mechanisms, protection from abuse and exploitation, enhancement of the skills and social security to all category of organised and unorganised workers including Migrant workers.

## Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT)

**initiative:** To promote Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) as an alternative, green transport fuel for efficient management of biomass and organic waste including municipal waste as well as from forest and agricultural waste including animal-husbandry and marine waste. This initiative envisages establishment of large number of CBG plants by private entrepreneurs.

## Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

- Section 5 sub-clause (k) and Section 9(k) of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 lay down that whoever taking advantage of a child's mental or physical disability, commits 'penetrative sexual assault' or 'sexual assault' on the child, commits 'aggravated penetrative sexual assault' or 'aggravated sexual assault' respectively.
- Section 6 of the POCSO Act lays down that whoever commits aggravated penetrative sexual assault shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than twenty years, but which may extend to imprisonment for life, which shall mean imprisonment for the remainder of natural life of that person, and shall also be liable to fine, or to death.
- Section-33 of the POCSO Act under sub-clause (8) provides that in appropriate cases, the Special Court may, in addition to the punishment, direct payment of such compensation as may be prescribed to the child for any physical or mental trauma caused to him or for immediate rehabilitation of such child.
- Rule 4 of the POCSO Rules, 2020 lays down a detailed procedure regarding care and protection, including counseling and therapy, of the victim of child sex abuse. Section-6 of the POCSO Rules, 2020 also has provision regarding providing of Medical aid and care to the victim of child sex abuse. Provision of Special Relief has also been prescribed in the POCSO Rules, 2020 for contingencies such as food, clothes, transport and other essential need.

**Meri Saheli Initiative** was launched as Pilot Project by Railway Protection Force (RPF) across South Eastern Railway for security of women passengers in trains originating in that zone. Considering its success in instilling a sense of security among women passengers, this initiative has been rolled over to all zonal railways across Indian Railways' network. Section 58 of the **Railways Act, 1989** provides for earmarking of accommodation for female passengers in trains.

- Launched to provide safety and security to lady passengers travelling by trains for their entire journey from originating station to terminating station.
- Dedicated teams of lady RPF personnel have been formed across all zonal railways for its implementation.

**National Beekeeping & Honey Mission (NBHM)** aims for the overall promotion & development of scientific beekeeping in the country to achieve the goal of 'Sweet Revolution' as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

- Promote holistic growth of beekeeping industry for income & employment generation for farm and non-farm households, to enhance agriculture/ horticulture production, developing infrastructural facilities, including setting up of Integrated Beekeeping Development Centre (IBDC)s/CoE, honey testing labs, bee disease diagnostic labs, custom hiring centres, Api-therapy centres, nucleus stock, bee breeders, etc. and empowerment of women through beekeeping.
- Besides, the scheme also aims to create awareness about scientific bee keeping under Mini Mission-I, post-harvest management of beekeeping, beehive products, including collection, processing, storage, marketing, value addition, etc. under Mini Mission-II and Research & Technology generation in beekeeping under Mini Mission-III.

Beekeeping is an agro-based activity which is being undertaken by farmers/ landless labourers in rural area as a part of Integrated Farming System (IFS). Beekeeping has been useful in pollination of crops, thereby, increasing income of the farmers/beekeepers by way of increasing crop yield and providing honey and other high value beehive products, viz.; bees wax, bee pollen, propolis, royal jelly, bee venom, etc. Diversified agro climatic conditions of India provide great potential and opportunities for beekeeping/ honey production and export of Honey.

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

Emerging demand for safe and healthy organic food with added flavour of being grown in pristine environment and virgin soils of India's North Eastern states is fast emerging as unique opportunity to the farmers of the region. The disadvantage of not being able to pick up green revolution is now proving a boon and region with its renewed vigour on modern organic agriculture is poised to become hub for organic production of its unique heritage crops.

- Provides end to end support to the farmers from farm to fork including quality production, effective postharvest management, value addition through processing and direct market linkages to national and international markets.
- Transformation of farmer clusters into Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) empowering the growers with institutional mechanisms, collective production and processing strength for quality and quantity and ensures emergence of new breed of organic agri-enterprises.
- Through the FPCs, farmers are achieving economies of scale, engaging bulk buyers and breaking off their dependencies on the traders/middlemen for market linkages.
- Under MOVCDNER, the FPCs get access to shared infrastructure including collection centres, custom hiring centres, processing infrastructure and packhouses, allowing them to add value to their produce and market them well.

MOVCDNER has also played a pivotal role in entrepreneurship development and has supported both FPCs and local entrepreneurs in establishing food business.

### **National Coal Index**

- Ministry of Coal has started Commercial Auction of coal mines on revenue share basis. In order to arrive at the revenue share based on market prices of coal, one National Coal Index (NCI) was conceptualized.
- The NCI is a price index which reflects the change of price level of coal on a particular month relative to the fixed base year.
- The base year for the NCI is FY 2017-18. Prices of coal from all the sales channels of coal, including import, as existing today are taken into account for compiling the NCI.

### **Agri Export Policy**

The Government introduced a comprehensive Agriculture Export Policy in December 2018, with the following objectives:

- To diversify our export basket, destinations and boost high value and value added agricultural exports, including focus on perishables.
- To promote novel, indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional and non-traditional Agri products exports.
- To provide an institutional mechanism for pursuing market access, tackling barriers and dealing with sanitary and phytosanitary issues.
- To strive to double India's share in world agri exports by integrating with global value chains.
- Enable farmers to get benefit of export opportunities in overseas market.

### **SEZ Policy**

The Special Economic Zones (SEZs) policy was launched in April, 2000. The SEZ Rules, 2006 came into effect on 10th February, 2006. The salient features of the SEZ scheme are:-

1. A designated duty free enclave to be treated as a territory outside the customs territory of India for the purpose of authorised operations in the SEZ;
2. No licence required for import;
3. Manufacturing or service activities allowed;
4. The Unit shall achieve Positive Net Foreign Exchange to be calculated cumulatively for a period of five years from the commencement of production;
5. Domestic sales subject to full customs duty and import policy in force;
6. SEZ units will have freedom for subcontracting;
7. No routine examination by customs authorities of export/import cargo;
8. SEZ Developers /Co-Developers and Units enjoy tax benefits as prescribed in the SEZs Act, 2005.

**Unified Farmer Service Platform (UFSP):** UFSP is a combination of Core Infrastructure, Data, Applications and Tools that enable seamless interoperability of various public and private IT systems in the agriculture ecosystem across the country. UFSP is envisaged to play the following role:

- Act as a central agency in the agri ecosystem (like UPI in the e Payments)
- Enables Registration of the Service Providers, public and private
- Enables Registration of the Farmer Services G2F, G2B, B2F and B2B
- Enforces various rules and validations required during the service delivery process
- Acts as a Repository of all the applicable standards, API's and formats
- It shall also act as a medium of data exchange amongst various schemes and services to enable comprehensive delivery of services to the farmer.

**Farmers Database:** For better planning, monitoring, policy making, strategy formulation and smooth implementation of schemes for the farmers a nationwide Farmers Database linked with land records is being created with the following objective:

- Develop nationwide database of farmers
- Keep a record of unique farmers.
- Unique farmer ID (FID) to uniquely identify a farmer
- To know benefits availed by a farmer under various schemes

This Centralized 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. The data of 4.3 crore farmers linked with land records have already been verified and the database would be unveiled shortly.



## PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (PIB) IAS UPSC – 8th February to 13th February – 2021



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Date February 26, 2021

### ARCHIVES

### GS-2

#### Table of Contents

- [GS-2](#)
- [PLI scheme for Telecom Sector](#)
- [Forward Looking and Growth Oriented Budget for Chemical and Petrochemical Sector](#)
- [GS-3](#)
- [Sub Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine \(SMPPQ\)](#)
- [Government announces liberalised guidelines for geo-spatial data](#)
- [Successful user trials of DRDO-developed Anti-Tank Guided Missile Systems 'Helina' and 'Dhruvastra'](#)
- [Increased outlay for BRO in Budget 2021-22](#)

### PLI scheme for Telecom Sector

#### *(Topic: Government policies in the Telecom sector)*

Pursuant to the extraordinary incentive of PLI being provided by Government of India in various sectors, the Cabinet approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Telecom and Networking Products. This approval comes in wake of very encouraging success of PLI related to Mobile and component manufacturing, which was announced in April 2020 during the height of Covid pandemic.

Cabinet decision addresses another component of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** to make India a global hub of manufacturing telecom equipment including core transmission equipment, 4G/5G Next Generation Radio Access Network and Wireless Equipment, Access & Customer Premises Equipment (CPE), Internet of Things (IoT) Access Devices, Other Wireless Equipment and Enterprise equipment like Switches, Routers etc.

- The core component of this scheme is to offset the huge import of telecom equipment worth more than Rs. 50 thousand crores and reinforce it with “Made in India” products both for domestic markets and exports.

- Financial Year 2019-20 shall be treated as the Base Year for computation of cumulative incremental sales of manufactured goods net of taxes.
- The Scheme will be operational from 1st April 2021.
- This scheme also addresses local manufacturing in MSME category because Government desires MSMEs to play an important role in the telecom sector and come out as national champions.
- This scheme will lead to incremental production of around ₹2.4 Lakh Crores with exports of around ₹2 Lakh Crores over 5 years. It is expected that scheme will bring investment of more than ₹3,000 crore and generate huge direct and indirect employment and taxes both.

## **Cabinet approves Amendments to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**

**Objective:** To introduce measures for strengthening Child Protection set-up to ensure best interest of children.

### **What is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children Act) 2015?**

- **Updated Legislation:** It was introduced and passed in Parliament in 2015 to replace the Juvenile Delinquency Law and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children Act) 2000.
- **Change in nomenclature:** The Act changes the nomenclature from Juvenile to child or 'child in conflict with law'. Also, it removes the negative connotation associated with the word "juvenile".
- **Special Provisions for Age 16-18 years:** One of the main provisions of the new Act was that juveniles charged with heinous crimes and who are between the ages of 16-18 years would be tried as adults and processed through the adult justice system. This provision received an impetus after the 2012 Delhi gangrape in which one of the accused was just short of 18 years, and was therefore tried as a juvenile.

**Juvenile Justice Board:** The nature of the crime, and whether the juvenile should be tried as a minor or a child, was to be determined by a Juvenile Justice Board (set up in every district). Also Child Welfare Committees must be set up in every district. Both must have at least one woman member each.

- **Adoption Related Clauses:** Another major provision was that the Act streamlined adoption procedures for orphans, abandoned and surrendered children and the existing Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been given the status of a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively
- **Inclusion of New Offences:** The Act included several new offences committed against children (like, illegal adoptions, use of child by militant groups, offences against disabled children, etc) which are not adequately covered under any other law.

### **What are the amendments passed by the Union Cabinet?**

#### **1. The inclusion of serious crimes apart from heinous crimes**

- It has included for the first time the category of “serious crimes” differentiating it from heinous crimes, while retaining heinous crimes. Both heinous and serious crimes have also been clarified for the first time, **removing any ambiguity**.
- What this means is that for a juvenile to be tried for a heinous crime as an adult, the punishment of the crime should not only have a maximum sentence of seven years or more, but also a minimum sentence of seven years.
- This provision has been made to ensure that children, as much as possible, are protected and kept out of the adult justice system.
- Heinous crimes with a minimum imprisonment of seven years pertain mostly to sexual offences and violent sexual crimes. Crime like the possession and sale of an illegal substance, such as drugs or alcohol, will now fall under the ambit of a “serious crime”.

## 2. Expanding the purview of district and additional district magistrates

- The NCPCR report of 2019-19 had found that not a single Child Care Institution in the country was found to be 100 per cent compliant to the provisions of the JJ Act.
- **DM and ADMs will monitor the functioning of various agencies** under the JJ Act in every district. This includes the Child Welfare Committees, the Juvenile Justice Boards, the District Child Protection Units and the Special juvenile Protection Units.
- Amendment says that no new children’s home can be opened without the **sanction** of the DM. They are also responsible now for ensuring that CCIs falling in their district are **following all norms and procedures** (earlier the process was relaxed and lacked effective oversight)
- The DM will also carry out **background checks of Child Welfare Committee members**, who are usually social welfare activists, including educational qualifications, as there is no such provision currently to check if a person has a case of girl child abuse against him.
- To hasten the process of adoption and ensure the swift rehabilitation of children into homes and foster homes, the amendment further provides that the DM will also now be in charge of sanctioning adoptions, removing the lengthy court process.

**The challenges:** While the amendments have been welcomed by most, in its attempt to provide better protection to children in need of care, the challenge perceived is that of having given too many responsibilities to the DM.

The amendments, once approved by Parliament, will increase the role of district magistrates and empower them to undertake inspections of childcare institutions.

## Cabinet approves Comprehensive Economic cooperation and Partnership Agreement between India and Mauritius

- The India-Mauritius CECPA will be the first trade Agreement to be signed by India with a country in Africa.

- The Agreement is a limited agreement, which will cover Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Dispute Settlement, Movement of Natural Persons, Telecom, Financial services, Customs Procedures and Cooperation in other Areas

### **Impact or benefits:**

- CECPA provides for an institutional mechanism to encourage and improve trade between the two countries.
- The CECPA between India and Mauritius covers 310 export items for India, including food stuff and beverages (80 lines), agricultural products (25 lines), textile and textile articles (27 lines), base metals and articles thereof (32 lines), electricals and electronic item (13 lines), plastics and chemicals (20 lines), wood and articles thereof (15 lines), and others.
- Mauritius will benefit from preferential market access into India for its 615 products, including frozen fish, speciality sugar, biscuits, fresh fruits, juices, mineral water, beer, alcoholic drinks, soaps, bags, medical and surgical equipment, and apparel.
- As regards trade in services, Indian service providers will have access to around 115 sub-sectors from the 11 broad service sectors such as professional services, computer related services, research & development, other business services, telecommunication, construction, distribution, education, environmental, financial, tourism & travel related, recreational, yoga, audio-visual services, and transport services.
- Both sides have also agreed to negotiate an Automatic Trigger Safeguard Mechanism (ATSM) for a limited number of highly sensitive products within two years of the Signing of the Agreement.

### **Background:**

India and Mauritius enjoy excellent bilateral relations, sustained by historic cultural affinities, frequent high-level political interactions, development cooperation, defence and maritime partnership, and people to people linkages.

- Mauritius is an important development partner of India. India had extended a 'Special Economic Package' of USD 353 million to Mauritius in 2016.
- The new Supreme Court building project is one of the five projects being implemented under this package and was jointly inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth in July 2020.
- In October 2019, Prime Minister Modi and the PM of Mauritius had jointly inaugurated the Phase -I of the Metro Express Project and the 100-bed state of the art ENT hospital project in Mauritius, also built under the special economic package.

- Since 2005, India has been among the largest trading partners of Mauritius, and has been one of the largest exporters of goods and services to Mauritius. According to the International Trade Centre (ITC), in 2019, the main import partners of Mauritius were India (13.85%), China (16.69%), South Africa (8.07%), and UAE (7.28%).
- The bilateral trade between India and Mauritius has registered a growth of 233% from USD 206.76 million in Financial Year (FY) 2005-06 to USD 690.02 million in FY 2019-20.
- India's exports to Mauritius surged 232% from USD 199.43 million in FY 2005-06 to USD 662.13 million in FY 2019-20, while India's imports from Mauritius increased 280% from USD 7.33 million in 2005-06 to USD 27.89 million in FY 2019-20.

The India-Mauritius CECPA will further cement the already deep and special relations between the two countries.

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## Forward Looking and Growth Oriented Budget for Chemical and Petrochemical Sector

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### *(Topic: Government policies in the Petrochemical sector)*

India is a net importer of Chemicals and Petrochemicals. The gap of domestic demand and supply of Chemicals and Petrochemicals is being bridged through imports. To attract investment in the sector, there had been a need of spread in duty structure of raw materials and intermediates/finished products. With this intention the duty structure support is provided for crucial Tariff Lines to become domestic Chemical and Petrochemical industry, globally cost competitive and to become Aatma Nirbhar Bharat.

Chemical and Petrochemical industry has been demanding since long back for reduction in import duty on feedstock such as 'Naphtha' to become globally cost competitive for production of Chemicals and Petrochemicals. This long standing demand has been taken care of by the Government in the budget 2021-22.

The massive **emphasis on infrastructure spending** is expected to result in additional consumption of petrochemicals like polymers and specialty chemicals.

Also, **Agriculture focused measure** like doubling of outlay for micro irrigation to Rs 10,000 crores will further fuel demand for polymer based irrigation products and services.

The new **vehicle scraping policy** will boost the polymer and elastomer consumption in anticipation of requirement of new and additional vehicles. The **increased outlay on healthcare and the fund for vaccination** will boost polymer consumption with requirements of syringes and other polymer based healthcare products. In general, with increased government spending the requirement of petrochemicals and polymers which are required in very wide range of sectors will also increase and provide a fillip to local demand.

Government has announced opening up of **seven mega textile parks** in the country to boost the textile industry. The world is looking for sourcing of textile products from India and buyers will be happy to find alternative to source the product from India rather than focusing of these products from China and other South East Asian countries. This will support entire textile value chain including manmade fiber as a component of value chain by having efficient supply chain and infrastructure made available in these textile parks.

- Synthetic Industry has welcomed increase in import duty on raw cotton. This will support farmers to get better remuneration on cotton production and also eliminate cheap imports coming from neighboring countries. As such India is surplus of cotton and rather than exporting cotton.
- Industry also welcomes increase in BCD on silk and silk products. Synthetic Industry will be able to substitute silk products silk products by supplying silk like products out of synthetic fibres.

**On Naphtha Duty reduced from 4% to 2.5%;** decreased custom duty on naphtha is likely to further improve the utilization of crackers resulting in availability of cost competitive olefins and aromatics. Low cost naphtha will also make a way into the availability of ethylene and propylene for petrochemical intermediates in value chain. Further boost to the production of major basic petrochemicals.

**On Carbon black Duty increased from 5% to 7.5%;** Carbon Black is used in making tyres. With the growth of automobile industry this would lead to new capacity creation of carbon black and also improve capacity utilization of domestic players.

**On Builder's ware of plastics Duty increased from 10% to 15%; It will help in** Competitive prices of plastics for local plastic processors against cheaper imports. Further, it will increase in capacity utilization by the plastic processors.

**On Polycarbonates Duty increased from 5 to 7.5%:** This is used to make shatterproof windows, lightweight eyeglass lenses, etc. The revised duty may attract new investment in the technology intensive polycarbonate market.

**On Methylene diphenyl diisocyanate (MDI) Duty increased from NIL to 7.5%; it is being used in the** production of polyurethanes for many applications, spandex yarn, etc. The revised custom duty will attract investments in India given the rising demand of polyurethanes and presence of no local players.

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## GS-3

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### Sub Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPPQ)

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***(Topic: Agriculture)***

The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare performs regulatory, monitoring, surveillance and Human Resource Development functions through a scheme "Sub Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPPQ)" with the aim of minimizing

loss to quality and yield of agricultural crops from the ravages of insect pests, diseases, weeds, nematodes, rodents etc. and to shield our bio-security from the incursion and spread of alien species. Revalidation of more than 1200 pack houses, rice mills, processing units, treatment facilities, fumigation agencies, post entry quarantine facilities etc., to facilitate agri export has been done.

- To promote Integrated Pest Management and judicious use of Pesticides, 14 crop specific and pest specific Package of Practices have been issued to the States during the lockdown period.
- To promote Make in India, 6788 Certificates of Registration (CR) have been issued to indigenous manufacturers of pesticides and 1011 CRs issued for export of pesticides. The Destructive Insect and Pests Act, 1914 and the Insecticides Act, 1968 provide the legal framework for the regulatory function.

During 2020-21, India became the **first country in the world to control locusts by using drones after finalizing protocols and Standard Operating Procedures**. The largest locust control operation in Indian history has been conducted by the Central Government in collaboration with the States. Locust attack was controlled in more than 5.70 lakh hectare area of 10 States. Control capabilities of Locust Circle Offices (LCOs) have been strengthened by deploying helicopters for aerial spraying of pesticides for locust control.

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## **Government announces liberalised guidelines for geo-spatial data**

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### ***(Topic: Science and Technology, new developments)***

By liberalizing the geo-spatial guidelines, the government has taken a historic decision that will lead to a One Lakh Crore Rupees Geo-Spatial economy. It will enable science to become a public movement and also to deliver a New India to people of the country.

Maps and accurate geospatial data are crucial for national infrastructure projects such as linkages of rivers, creation of industrial corridors and deploying smart power systems. Emerging vibrant technologies like Digital India, Smart Cities, eCommerce, autonomous drones, delivery, logistics and urban transport require a leap forward in mapping with greater depth, resolution and precision. In every economic endeavor, spanning agriculture, finance, construction, mining and local enterprise, India's farmers, small businesses and corporations alike stand to gain tremendously from the application of innovative technologies based on modern geospatial data technologies and mapping services.

The next generation of technologies will use hyper-resolution maps.

- Availability of comprehensive, highly accurate, granular and constantly updated representation of Geospatial Data will significantly benefit diverse sectors of the economy and will significantly boost innovation in the country and greatly enhance the preparedness of the country for emergency response/

- The availability of data and modern mapping technologies to Indian companies is also crucial for achieving the vision of AtmaNirbharBharat and a five trillion-dollar economy.
- For Indian entities, there would be complete deregulation with no prior approvals, security clearances, licenses, etc. for acquisition and production of geospatial data and geospatial data services including maps
- All geospatial data produced using public funds, except classified geospatial data collected by security/law enforcement agencies, will be made accessible for scientific, economic and developmental purposes to all Indian Entities and without any restrictions on their use. Government agencies and others need to collaborate and work towards openlinked geospatial data
- Stakeholders benefitted will include practically every segment of society, from industry to academia to government departments

## **Successful user trials of DRDO-developed Anti-Tank Guided Missile Systems 'Helina' and 'Dhruvastra'**

### ***(Topic: Defence and technology)***

Joint User Trials for Helina (Army Version) and Dhruvastra (Air Force Version) Missile Systems have been carried out from Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) platform in desert ranges. The missile systems have been designed and developed indigenously by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Five missions were carried out for evaluating the missile capabilities in minimum and maximum range. The missiles were fired in hover and max forward flight against realistic static and moving targets. Some missions were carried out with warheads against derelict tanks. A mission was carried out against a moving target from a forward flying helicopter.

The Helina and Dhruvastra are third generation, Lock on Before Launch (LOBL) fire and forget Anti-Tank Guided Missiles that can engage targets both in direct hit mode as well as top attack mode. The system has all-weather day and night capability and can defeat battle tanks with conventional armour as well as with explosive reactive armour. It is one of the most-advanced anti-tank weapons in the world. Now, the missile systems are ready for induction.

## **Increased outlay for BRO in Budget 2021-22**

### ***(Topic: Defence)***

Union Budget 2021-22 has proposed increased funding for Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to boost infrastructure in frontier areas.

- Allocation for road development projects in border areas has been raised from Rs 5,586.23 crore to Rs 6,004.08 crore for Financial Year 2021-22.

- The budget for maintenance of border roads has gone up from Rs 750 crore to Rs 850 crore, while the capital works allocation has been revised upwards to Rs 2,500 crore from budgetary provision of Rs 2,300 crore for Financial Year 2020-21.

This increased allocation shall facilitate procurement of modern construction plants, equipment and machinery to enhance the pace of construction warranted by strategic imperatives. A large share of increased funding will be used for better upkeep of strategic roads in the border areas and it will also give a major boost to construction of strategically important roads, tunnels and bridges along the northern and north-eastern borders.

## **Prelims-oriented News**

**India's first full-fledged international cruise terminal:** Kochi, Kerala

**Sultan of Oman:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik

**International Mother Language Day:** 21 February

**Mission "One Nation One Standard":** To make India the leader in setting global benchmarks in setting standards. While all areas of production and services be included in this national mission, bringing a national uniformity and standardization in all kinds of public procurement and tendering can be an immediate deliverable.

- Lab testing in India should be world standards.
- Modern equipments and latest technologies should be used there. He added that Gap analysis of BIS and Government labs be taken up on priority basis as well.
- Effort should be made to merge different standards under one standard as much as possible.
- Industry should be invited for more dialogue, participation and collaboration in this mission of "one nation one standard".
- Process of granting certification should be kept as simple as possible and duplication of work should be avoided.

We should aim to be the world leader in having maximum industrial products under Indian Standards and no one should feel the need to go abroad to get quality certification.

**Delisting of Devendra Kula Vellalar community from SC community:** The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has clarified that the reports appearing in media about delisting of Devendra Kula Vellalar community from SC soon, is completely misinformed. The Cabinet has approved for categorising (7) SC communities into Devendra Kula Vellalar which would also be a part of the Scheduled Castes list of Tamil Nadu.

- The Devendra Kula Vellalar community is a Scheduled Caste community that has seven sub-sects and comprise over 17.05 per cent of the Scheduled Caste community in Tamil Nadu, according to Census 2011. The community has been demanding to be given a Most Backward status and remove SC status from their community, as they are agrarian and not manual scavengers. They also demanded a 6 per cent reservation for the community.
- This community is currently identified by seven different sub-sects, i.e., Devendrakulathan, Kudumban, Pannadi, Kaaladi, Kadayam, Pallan and Patharia. They had been demanding to bring all these sub-sects under one umbrella. On February 14, PM Modi on his visit to Tamil Nadu announced that the Union government has accepted the demand to bring seven sub-sects of the Devendrakula Vellalar community under one umbrella. Thus, now rather than being called by their independent sect name, they will all be called Devendrakula Vellalar.

### **11th IEA-IEF-OPEC Symposium on Energy Outlooks**

- The symposium saw the presence of heads of all top inter-governmental energy agencies -IEF, IEA, OPEC, IRENA and the GECF. Also, dignitaries like, H.E. Norma Rocío Nahle García, Secretary of Energy, Mexico and H.E. Timipre Sylva, Minister of State of Petroleum Resources of Nigeria participated in the event.
- Apart from the comparative analysis of short, medium, and long-term energy outlooks that OPEC and the IEA published in 2020, the trilateral symposium reflected on the long-term outlooks of key producer and consumer countries.

#### *On India:*

- While the world's total primary energy demand would increase at less than 1% per annum till 2040, India's energy demand would grow at about 3% per annum till 2040.
- The recently-released IEA's India Energy Outlook 2021 highlights that India has now emerged as the key centre for global energy demand, and is expected to become world's largest energy consumer soon. Our share in global energy consumption is set to double in the next three decades.
- India has appealed to the oil-producing countries to have a rethink on continuing and increasing production cuts. In the collective interests of both producing and consuming countries, prices should be reasonable and responsible. The price-sensitive Indian consumers are getting adversely affected by rising petroleum product prices. It also affects demand growth, which could potentially impact the delicate aspirational economic growth trajectory not just in India but in other developing countries as well.

**India-Singapore CEO Forum:** Inviting businesses from both sides to bring in sparkle into India and Singapore's partnership, Minister of Railways; Commerce & Industry; Consumer Affairs and Food & Public Distribution Shri Piyush Goyal said that ours is a strong & productive partnership, which can be taken to higher levels. The minister said that it is a partnership that will help us become Aatmanirbhar & also give opportunities for us to expand our global footprint.

- Urged businesses to look at ways how we can expand the engagement and encourage India's youth to use more innovative technologies.
- India & Singapore are working together in cyber security & disaster relief, and Education and skill development can be taken up as pillars where we can work together and learn from Singapore's experience.
- E-Commerce, Fintech, smart manufacturing, healthcare are significant areas where India offers a large market. He said that our working together in these areas can truly transform India's own effort to give the best to our people.
- Singapore and the GIFT city which is our first operational smart city, have tied up with the Singapore exchange to boost international investment in India.
- Buddhism, Bollywood and Business can help in cementing the partnership

**Release of 3rd Edition of Indian Sign Language dictionary:** Has 10,000 terms (including 6,000 earlier terms)

- The Dictionary has been brought out by the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC), an autonomous Institute under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The 3rd edition of the ISL Dictionary contains total 10,000 terms of everyday use, academic terms, legal & administrative terms, medical terms, technical terms and agricultural terms. The Dictionary also contains regional signs used in different parts of the country.
- The 1st edition of the ISL Dictionary was launched on 23rd March 2018 with 3000 terms and the 2nd edition with 6000 terms (including earlier 3000 terms) was launched on 27th February 2019.

**All India Surveys:** Being conducted by Labour Bureau, an attached office of Ministry of Labour & Employment

- The five All India surveys on migrant workers, domestic workers, employment generated by professionals and transport sector have tremendous role to play at national level by providing data on the most effected labour market participants.
- This is the first time that the Bureau will collect data through greater use of information technology which will enable it to effectively meet the rapid demands for data in the field of labour and employment. Surveys will be conducted using AI based technology intervention with Speech-to-Text facility along with Geo-Fencing Technology, Travel Schedule, Message Broadcast functionalities inbuilt. Real time reporting and monitoring with advance dashboards, command and control centre are also being developed. The IT interventions in conduct of surveys will reduce the completion time of surveys by at least 30-40%. The Bureau will engage an IT partner for providing the technological support for these surveys. This success of Bureau in utilisation of this innovative technology will be worth emulating by other agencies involved in similar survey works.
- These ambitious surveys will provide a comprehensive picture of the employment scenario in the country thereby formulating sound National Employment policy of the country.

1.

1. All India Survey of Migrant workers,
2. All India survey of Domestic Workers,
3. All India survey of employment generated by Professionals,
4. All India survey of employment generated in Transport Sector and
5. All-India Quarterly Establishment based Employment Survey

The Bureau is also going to launch All India Quarterly Establishment Based Employment Survey to assess the employment situation in establishments with more than 10 workers and also less than 10 workers. These surveys will fill the huge data gap that exists on the employment numbers in the unorganized sector.

**Sub-Mission on Seeds & Planting Materials:** To Produce and Supply quality seeds to Farmers

- By: The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare
- To enhance production and productivity in the country through various components namely Seed Village Programme, Establishment of Seed Processing- cum- Seed Storage Godowns at Gram Panchyat Level, National Seed Reserve, Boosting Seed Production in Private Sector and Strengthening of Quality Control Infrastructure Facilities.

**Launch of E-Chhawani portal & mobile app:** Through the portal, the residents of cantonment areas will be able to avail basic services like renewal of leases, application for birth & death certificates, water & sewerage connections, trade licences, mobile toilet locators and payment of different types of taxes and fees, with just a click of a button. The portal, jointly developed by eGov Foundation, Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Directorate General Defence Estates (DGDE) and National Informatics Centre (NIC), provides a platform to the residents to avail these services from the comfort of their home.

**ASI Athlete creates history by breaking National Record and Qualifying for Tokyo Olympics 2021**

- At the 8th National Race Walking Championship, held at Ranchi, Athletes of ASI created history by Qualifying for Tokyo Olympics 2021.
- Nb Sub Sandeep Kumar of 16 JAT Regiment won Gold medal and created a new National Record with timing of 1:: 20.16sec & Gdr Rahul of 18 Grenadiers secured Silver medal with timing of 1::20.26sec both the athletes secured berth for Tokyo 2021.
- The Tokyo Olympics qualification time for men's 20 km race walk event is 1::21:00sec. A country can send a maximum of three athletes in an individual event.

**Amazon India to commence Electronic Devices Manufacturing in India:**

Amazon is going to start manufacturing of Amazon Fire TV stick from India. Amazon will commence its manufacturing efforts with contract manufacturer Cloud Network Technology, a subsidiary of Foxconn in Chennai and start production later this year. The device manufacturing program will be able to produce hundreds of thousands of Fire TV

Stick devices every year, catering to the demands of customers in India. Amazon will continuously evaluate scaling capacity to additional marketplaces/cities depending on the domestic demand.

India has taken several key steps to encourage electronics manufacturing in India. The **Production Linked Manufacturing (PLI)** for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing has emerged as a major success with many international companies commencing production of electronics goods from India.

**Entry of Amazon in this sector adds to the success story of electronics manufacturing in India. This will enhance domestic production capacities, and create jobs as well**

**Pey Jal Survekshan:** To be conducted to ascertain equitable distribution of water, reuse of wastewater and mapping of water bodies through a challenge process

- Under Jal Jeevan Mission- Urban
- Data on drinking water, waste water management, non-revenue water and condition of 3 water bodies in the city will be collected through face-to-face interviews with citizens and municipal officials as per the approved questionnaire, on-call interviews, water sample collection and laboratory testing, and field survey for non-revenue water.
- Mission will be monitored through a technology-based platform on which beneficiary response will be monitored along with progress and output-outcome.

Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) (JJM (U)) is designed to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all 4,378 statutory towns in accordance with SDG Goal- 6. Also, sewerage/septage management in 500 AMRUT cities with the objective of making them water secure are the major focus areas under JJM (U).

**Launch of ‘Mahabahu-Brahmaputra’, laying of the foundation of Dhubri Phulbari Bridge and performance of Bhumi Pujan for construction of Majuli Bridge:** In Assam

The launch of **Mahabahu-Brahmaputra** will be marked by the inauguration of the **Ro-Pax vessel** operations between Neamati-Majuli Island, North Guwahati-South Guwahati and Dhubri-Hatsingimari; Shilanyas of Inland Water Transport (IWT) Terminal at Jogighopa and various tourist jetties on River Brahmaputra and launch of digital solutions for Ease-of-Doing-Business. The program is aimed at providing seamless connectivity to the Eastern parts of India and includes various development activities for the people living around River Brahmaputra and River Barak. These jetties will promote river cruise tourism, generate local employment and also generate growth for local business.

**Dhubri Phulbari Bridge:** Between Dhubri (on North Bank) and Phulbari (on South Bank).

- The proposed Bridge will be located on NH-127B

- It will connect Dhubri in Assam to Phulbari, Tura, Rongram and Rongjeng in Meghalaya.
- The bridge will meet the long-standing demand of the people from Assam and Meghalaya who were depending on ferry services to travel between the two banks of the river. It will reduce the distance of 205 Km to be travelled by Road to 19 Km, which is the total length of the bridge.

**Majuli Bridge:** A two-lane Bridge on the Brahmaputra between Majuli (North Bank) and Jorhat (South Bank).

- The bridge will be located on NH-715K and will connect Neematighat (on Jorhat side) and Kamalabari (on Majuli side).
- The Construction of the bridge has been a long demand of the people of Majuli who for generations have been dependent on the ferry services to connect with the mainland of Assam.

**Father of Indian Cinema:** Dada Saheb Phalke

- The Father of Indian Cinema, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, popularly known as Dada Saheb Phalke introduced the art of cinema in India and opened the door of unlimited imagination before our countrymen.
- His visionary ambition laid a strong base for today's flourished Indian entertainment industry.
- Paying tributes to the legend on his 77th Punyathithi and also as part of the on-going 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations, Films Division is screening select documentary and animation films on 16th February, 2021 on its website and You Tube channel.

**Laying of the foundation stone of Maharaja Suheldev Memorial and development work of Chittaura Lake:** In Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh marking the birth anniversary of Maharaja Suheldev

- Suhaldev or Suheldev is an Indian king from Shravasti, popularly known to have defeated and killed the Ghaznavid general **Ghazi Saiyyad Salar Masud** at Bahraich in 1034 CE.
- He is mentioned in the 17th century Persian-language historical romance **Mirat-i-Masudi**. Since the 20th century, various Hindu nationalist groups have characterized him as a Hindu King who defeated a Muslim invader.
- **Legend of Suheldev: The King Who Saved India**, a novel by **Amish Tripathi**, is based on the legend of Suhaldev
- On 24 February 2016, BJP president Amit Shah unveiled a statue of Suhaldev in Bahraich.[16]
- On 29 December 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a commemorative stamp on Maharaja Suhaldev.[17]
- On 24 June 2019, Om Prakash Rajbhar – the president of Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party – unveiled a statue of Suhaldev in Indore village of Ghazipur district

- Shravasti was a city of ancient India and one of the six largest cities in India during Gautama Buddha's lifetime. The city was located in the fertile Gangetic plains in the present-day district of the same name, Shravasti, that belongs to Devipatan division of Uttar Pradesh near Balrampur, some 175 kilometres (109 mi) north-east of Lucknow.

### **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, India sign MoU to promote health research**

- To identify opportunities to initiate scientific and technological collaborations; these will focus on developing and testing new preventions, therapies and interventions that can help to solve major health concerns that affect India and other developing countries.
- As per the MoU, areas of research collaboration would include genetic diseases that impact infant and neonatal mortality; new diagnostics and devices for infectious disease and environmental surveillance; development of cost-effective processes for drug, vaccines, biologics, and diagnostics manufacturing; novel microbiome-directed foods; socio-economic impact of science and technological tools; and other areas of health and development.

### **Personality in News**

#### **Sant Ravidasji**

- Ravidas was an Indian mystic poet-sant of the **Bhakti movement** and founder of **Ravidassia religion** during the 15th to 16th century CE.
- Venerated as a guru (teacher) in the region of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and mainly Punjab and Haryana. He was a poet-saint, social reformer and a spiritual figure.
- Ravidas's devotional verses were included in the Sikh scriptures known as **Guru Granth Sahib**. The **Panch Vani text** of the Dadupanthi tradition within Hinduism also includes numerous poems of Ravidas. He taught removal of social divisions of caste and gender, and promoted unity in the pursuit of personal spiritual freedoms.
- Medieval era texts, such as the Bhaktamal suggest that Ravidas was the disciple of the **Brahmin bhakti-poet Ramananda**
- The songs of Ravidas discuss **Nirguna-Saguna themes**, as well as ideas that are at the foundation of **Nath Yoga philosophy** of Hinduism.
- He frequently mentions the term **Sahaj**, a mystical state where there is a union of the truths of the many and the one.
- Legends link him as **the guru of Meera**, another major Bhakti movement poet.

#### **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Birth – [February 19, 1630]**

- Born at Shivner; Father: Shahji Bhosale (a Maratha general who held the jagirs of Pune and Supe under the Bijapur Sultanate), Mother: Jija Bai – Shivaji Jayanti is observed on this day.

- Inherited Jagir of Poona from his father in 1637
- Shaishta khan captured Poona but Shivaji reclaimed it
- Displayed his military zeal for the first time in 1645 when as a teenager, he successfully got control of the Torna Fort which was under Bijapur
- Acquired the Kondana Fort, both these forts were under Adil Shah of Bijapur. Shah then got Shahaji imprisoned in a bid to contain Shivaji.
- **Battle of Pratapgarh in 1659:** Shivaji's forces vanquished the Bijapur Sultanate's army

**Aurangzeb sent Raja Jai Singh of Amber, who besieged Purander fort → Treaty of Purander, 1665**

**Shivaji surrendered 23 / 35 forts to Mughals and said to be loyal to Mughal empire**

- - It was agreed that Shivaji would meet Aurangzeb at Agra. Shivaji also agreed to send his son Sambhaji as well.
  - At Agra in 1666, when Shivaji went to meet the Mughal emperor, the Maratha warrior felt he was insulted by Aurangzeb and stormed out of the court. He was arrested and kept prisoner. The clever escape of Shivaji and his son from imprisonment in disguise out of Agra is a legendary tale even today.
- In 1674, Shivaji recaptured all his lost territory & crowned himself at Raigarh assuming the title of Chhatrapati, Shakakarta, Kshatriya Kulavantas and Haindava Dharmodhhaarak.
- 3 April 1680 at Raigad: Death
- Shivaji: Considered a master of the guerrilla warfare
- Kanhoji Angre, his admiral, is called the 'Father of Indian Navy'.

**Also on this day – Death of Gopal Krishna Gokhale**

### **Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915)**

A protégé of **Ranade** and influenced by the British philosopher-parliamentarian **Edmund Burke**, Gokhale worked towards realising constitutional ideals in India for three decades and abjured the use of reactionary or revolutionary ways.

Gokhale first arrived on the national scene after cross-examining British colonial expenditure at the Welby Commission of 1897 in England. Gokhale's work earned him praise in India as he laid bare **British military financing policies** that heavily burdened Indian taxpayers much to the chagrin of then Viceroy Lord Curzon — regarded among the most vituperative of racists to occupy that post.

In 1899, Gokhale joined **the Indian National Congress**, emerging as one of the main leaders of its '**moderate**' wing, and gave up teaching three years later to work as a lawmaker for the remainder of his life.

At Bombay, Gokhale opposed the British government's onerous land revenue policies, advocated free and compulsory primary education, and asked for the creation of equal opportunities to fight against untouchability. At the Imperial legislature, Gokhale played a key role in framing the **Morley-Minto reforms of 1909** and advocated for the expansion of legislative councils at both the Centre and the provinces. A critic of British imperial bureaucracy, Gokhale favoured decentralisation and the promotion of panchayat and taluka bodies.

He also spoke for the Indian diaspora living in other parts of the British Empire and opposed tooth and nail the indentured labour system, raising their problems in the Imperial legislature as well as at Congress sessions.

Gokhale became **Congress president at its Banaras session in 1905**. This was also the time when bitter differences had arisen between his group of 'Moderates' and the 'Extremists' led by Lala Lajpat Rai and Bal Gangadhar Tilak among others. Matters came to a head when the two factions split at the **Surat session of 1907**. Historians note that despite ideological differences, Gokhale maintained cordial relations with his opponents. In 1907, he fervently campaigned for the release of Lala Lajpat Rai, who was imprisoned that year by the British at Mandalay in present-day Myanmar.

After Mahatma Gandhi's return to India, he joined Gokhale's group before going on to lead the independence movement. Gandhi regarded Gokhale as his political mentor, and wrote a book in Gujarati dedicated to the leader titled 'Dharmatma Gokhale'.

- Gokhale with the guidance of his mentor, M G Ranade started the Deccan Sabha in 1896 as a rival organisation to Poona Sarvajanik Sabha.
- In 1905, when Gokhale was elected president of the Indian National Congress and was at the height of his political power, he founded the Servants of India Society to specifically further one of the causes dearest to his heart: the expansion of Indian education.
- 1915: At the request of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, conveyed to him by C. F. Andrews, Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in January 9, 1915.

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