

June 25th- July 1st



GENERAL STUDIES-1

INDIAN CULTURE

HISTORY

CENTENARY YEAR CELEBRATIONS OF SABARMATI ASHRAM

Centenary year celebrations of Sabarmati Ashram happened in the presence of Prime Minister.

Sabarmati Ashram:

Sabarmati Ashram (also known as Gandhi Ashram, Harijan Ashram, or Satyagraha Ashram) is located in the Sabarmati suburb of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, on the banks of the River Sabarmati.

- It was from his base here that Gandhi led the Dandi march also known as the Salt Satyagraha on 12 March 1930. Before starting the march to Dandi, Gandhiji declared that he will not return to the ashram before the independence of the country.

The Ashram was started in all earnest with a two-fold purpose- one was to carry on the search for Truth, and the other was to create a non-violent group of workers, who would create a non-violent group of workers, who would organize and help to secure freedom for the country.



GENERAL STUDIES-2

GOVERNANCE ISSUES AND POLICIES

FALSE CLAIM PROVES COSTLY FOR THE MINISTER

The Election Commission disqualified Narottam Mishra, a Minister in the Madhya Pradesh government. He has been barred from contesting polls for the next three years for filing wrong accounts of election expenditure.

A link to Representation of People Act, 1951

Section 10A of the Act endows powers on the EC to disqualify candidates who provide false information to the Commission on expenses incurred during the polls.

Powers and Functions of ECI

- ✓ To determine the territorial constituencies all over India as per recent Delimitation act of the Parliament.
- ✓ To control preparation of electoral rolls and revise it time to time and register new voters.
- ✓ To notify dates and schedules of elections.
- ✓ To register and recognize political parties, grant them status of national or state parties and allocate symbols to parties.
- ✓ To determine the Code of Conduct (*Aachar Sanhita*)
- ✓ To determine comprehensive policy for Media at the time of elections such as ban on exit polls until election of all phases or states have been completed.
- ✓ To advise President and Governor on matters related to post election disqualifications of sitting MPs and MLAs. The advice of Election Commission is binding on President or the Governor, as case may be.
- ✓ In the cases of persons found guilty of corrupt practices at elections which come before the Supreme Court and High Courts are also referred to the Commission for its opinion on the question as to whether such person shall be disqualified and, if so, for what period. The opinion is again binding on SC or HC or President as case may be.
- ✓ To advise President for the necessary new staff and regarding election in a state where President Rule is continuing.
- ✓ To cancel polls in event of rigging, booth capturing, violence and other irregularities.

THE EVM CONTROVERSY

Political parties, over the years, have blamed the electronic voting machine (EVM) for their electoral defeat. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has, however, time and again demonstrated the reliability and fool-proof nature of the EVM.



Facts about EVMs

EVMs are standalone machines and are not networked either by wire or by wireless to any other machine or system. Hence, they cannot be influenced or manipulated by signals from mobile phones or any other source.

- The software in the machine is burnt into a one-time programmable chip or masked chip and can never be altered or tampered with.
- The source code of the software is not handed over to any outsider.
- The ECI also cited judgments of different High Courts and the Supreme Court of India that upheld the reliability of EVMs.

Building reliability

The ECI, to enhance transparency, provides an opportunity for political parties and candidates to participate in testing the reliability of the machines. Party representatives, candidates and election presiding officers conduct a mock test of machines at different stages before the actual election.

Using blockchain technology:

Some experts have suggested the use of blockchain technology. Due to its unique attributes of trust, transparency and immutability, such a system is expected to mitigate issues like vote manipulation in political processes.

Blockchain can be thought of as a public account ledger, an immutable, transparent and permanent one.

- Each transaction is recorded and stored in the ledger that is out on a public bulletin board.
- Every transaction adds a block to the chain of transactions and each one is evaluated by every user based on algorithms they've agreed upon.
- Rather than being kept in single location, a copy of the blockchain is stored on every user's server so that a user cannot alter it without other users finding out.

In blockchain voting, each transaction is similar to a vote and through the use of multiple blockchains along with public key encryption, the voting process is secured while protecting the anonymity of voters.



Advantages

- ✓ Blockchains are transparent and designed to have a decentralized authority which ensures that control is not in one hand and the process is visible to the public always.
- ✓ Further, the audit trail of the transactions combined with public key encryption solves the issue of auditability.

International experience

The technology is already being used by various countries like Australia, Denmark, Norway, Malta, Spain and South Korea. In India, given the deep penetration of cellphones and the unique identification (Aadhaar) system, blockchain could be a practical and feasible tool to fight voter fraud and alleviate vote authentication and validation concerns.

NCBC TO GET CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

National Commission for Backward Classes, a statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, will get a constitutional status.

Backgrounder:

The bill seeking constitutional status was referred to the Rajya Sabha's select committee and after having reached consensus, in all likelihood, it will be passed by the upper house.

NCBC

Set up in 1993, the NCBC was entrusted with examining requests for inclusion of any class of citizens as a backward class in the lists and hear complaints of over-inclusion or under-inclusion of any backward class in such lists and advise central government on the matter.

Important provisions

- Defines Socially and Educationally Backward Classes.
- Provides for Parliament's approval for every inclusion into and exclusion from the Central List of Other Backward Classes.
- Repeal of National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 and Dissolution of the Commission constituted under the Act of 1993.
- Composition of the new Commission, i.e. National Commission for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes, with a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and three other Members.

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PRIVATE BANKS TO COME UNDER THE SCANNER OF CVC

The RBI has given approval to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) to probe allegations of corruption in private sector banks and against their employees.

SC's ruling

The SC, last year, had ruled that the chairman, managing directors and other officers of a private bank can be regarded as public servants for the purposes of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, 1988.

CVC

The CVC (Central Vigilance Commission) was set up by the Government in February, 1964 on the recommendations of the Committee on Prevention of Corruption, headed by Shri K. Santhanam.

CVC is the apex vigilance institution, free of control from any executive authority, monitoring all vigilance activity under the Central Government and advising various authorities in Central Government organizations in planning, executing, reviewing and reforming their vigilance work.

The Commission has been made a multi member Commission with "statutory status".

The Commission consists of:

- A Central Vigilance Commissioner – Chairperson;
- Not more than two Vigilance Commissioners – Members;

SEDITION LAW IS NECESSARY EVIL

Sedition law in India was introduced by the British as to keep the Indians from protesting against the government and to have a law by which they can prosecute a person if he is not obeying or planning to overthrow the government and to keep the people in control.

What is sedition law?

The sedition law was made a part of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in 1870 in the backdrop of rising fears of an uprising against the colonial administration. This colonial piece of legislation continued to be a part of the statute book even after India gained independence in 1947, despite demands to scrap it.



Definition:

Section 124A of the IPC: Whoever by words either spoken or written or by signs or by visible representation or otherwise brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, the government established by law; or

- Whoever by the above means excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law, has committed the offence of sedition.

As of the present Indian constitution no fundamental right is absolute, most of them have their restrictions, freedom to speech and expression 19(1)(a) has its restrictions in 19(2), and so likewise others also have their restrictions but, restrictions should be such that they are not arbitrary, or excessive in nature, beyond what is required in the interests of the public

In the case of **Kedarnath vs State of Bihar**, Supreme court explained the scope of sedition law, it stated that “A citizen has the right to write or speak any thing about the government or its measures, by way of criticism or comment so long that it does not incite people to do violence against the government established by law or with the intention of disrupting public order”.

People have the right to freedom of speech and expression and they have the right to criticize the government, so long they do not have the intention to wage war against the government and incite people to commit violence or disrupt public order, people have the right to speech, supreme court made it clear that only the words or writing are vigorous enough to do the above mentioned things can be counted as seditious.

In *Indra Das v. State of Assam* and *Arup Bhuyan v. State of Assam*, the Supreme Court unambiguously stated that only speech that amounts to “incitement to imminent lawless action” can be criminalised.

In *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India*, the famous 66A judgment, the Supreme Court drew a clear distinction between “advocacy” and “incitement”, stating that only the latter could be punished.

Conclusion: It’s high time that the Government realizes the need to repeal the colonial era- Sedition Law which has been arbitrarily used by the authorities over the years to merely “silence peaceful political dissent”. Using sedition laws to silence peaceful criticism is the hallmark of an oppressive government.



At this juncture, it is important to point out that the democratic edifice of our country is not fragile to be easily shattered by ways of speeches in public places or by printing an article in the print media. In other words, the unity and integrity of India and the legitimacy of the Indian state are not as weak as it was in the case of the British colonial regime to be threatened and shattered by the speeches or the writings of a section of the political class.

APEDA: PLASTIC RICE JUST A RUMOR

Agricultural and Processed Foods Export Development Agency (**APEDA**) has said that the rumors about plastic rice making rounds in the social media are false. The videos base their judgement on the bouncing property of the rice balls, however it is a natural property of rice.

Explanation

According to APEDA, the buoyancy of rice balls dropping on a hard surface is its natural property and it depends on the amylose content.

If, amylose is low (<10%), the rice on cooking tends to become very sticky and the rice balls have no buoyancy on dropping to a surface. However, the rice balls made up of cooked rice from intermediate to high amylose (22-30%) type rice, will have buoyancy.

APEDA

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act 1985.

It works under the Ministry of Commerce.

APEDA is mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and development of the following scheduled products related to horticulture, Meat, Dairy, confectionary, alcohol, floriculture etc.,

- Chairman – Appointed by the Central Government.

LAUNCH OF WEB APPLICATION FOR LEGAL SERVICES TO PRISONERS

National Legal Services Authority (**NALSA**) has launched a Web Application for free Legal Services to Prisoners and the Legal Services Management System developed through the NIC.

Key facts:

The application shall make the legal services system more transparent; this application will be universally useful for all the relevant authorities to



monitor the grant of legal aid to the prisoners in order to ensure that absolutely no prisoner goes unrepresented right from the first day of his production in the court.

About NALSA:

NALSA has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to provide free legal services to weaker sections of society. The aim is to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reasons of economic or other disabilities.

Important functions:

- NALSA organises Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes.
- NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalised and excluded groups and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes.
- Services provided by the agency include free legal aid in civil and criminal matters for the poor and marginalised people who cannot afford the services of a lawyer in any court or tribunal.
- Free legal services include provision of aid and advice to beneficiaries to access the benefits under the welfare statutes and schemes and to ensure access to justice in any other manner.

WELFARE SCHEMES AND DEVELOPMENTAL GROUPS

KANYASHREE PRAKALPA SCHEME GETS UN AWARD

Initiated by: West Bengal government

Purpose of the scheme: It seeks to reduce the high child marriage rates and low female education rates in the state.

- It has a cash component: the money will be deposited into the bank account of girls every year if they remained in school and were unmarried.
- This initiative has yielded “drastic reduction in child marriage, increase in female education and female empowerment.”

UN Public Service Awards:

Awarded to institutions from across the world for their innovation and excellence in providing public services.

- It lays emphasis on public services in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The awards aim to raise the image of public service; enhance trust in



NEW TRAINING PROGRAMME 'COMMIT'

A new training programme Comprehensive Online Modified Modules on Induction Training (COMMIT) for State Government officials has been launched. The objective of this training programme is to improve the public service delivery mechanism and provide citizen centric administration through capacity building of officials who interact with the citizens on day-to-day basis.

What you need to know about COMMIT?

The COMMIT programme, developed by DoPT in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will supplement the existing 12-Day ITP launched in 2014-15 for newly recruited state Government officials to develop in them Generic & Domain specific competencies.

- The programme will cover approximately 74,000 State Government officials in the financial year 2017-18.
- The modules on soft skills will be delivered as e-Modules & through face-to-face training and the domain modules will be covered through e-Modules only. The programme will be implemented through State Administrative Training Institutes (ATIs).

INDIA AND ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

IPISH: A UNIQUE START-UP PORTAL

India-Portugal International Start Up Hub (IPISH), launched in Lisbon by Prime Ministers of India and Portugal, is a unique startup Portal.

Details

This is an initiative by Startup India, supported by Commerce & Industry Ministry and Startup Portugal

- Objective is to create a mutually supportive entrepreneurial partnership.
- This portal will provide information on the start-up hotspots of Bangalore, Delhi and Lisbon; and policy, taxation, and visa options.
- Simply put, it is a Go-To-Market Guide to support start-ups.
- IPISH is expected to help in mutual capacity building, and enable connections between start-ups, investors, and incubators

It is also expected to establish a network of honorary ambassadors based in India and Portugal to guide start-ups from both countries.

OPENING OF NATHU LA CONDITIONAL

Accusing Indian troops of “crossing the boundary” in the Sikkim sector, China has conveyed that it would reopen the Nathu La Pass for Indian pilgrims travelling to Kailash Mansarovar, only if there is immediate withdrawal.

- Nathu La is a mountain pass in the Himalayas. It connects the Indian state of Sikkim with China’s Tibet Autonomous Region.



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION TO BE LED BY AN INDIAN

Former Chief Economic Advisor Kaushik Basu was appointed as the President of the International Economic Association (IEA), for a term of three years.

IEA

Established: 1950

- A Non-Governmental Organization
- Has maintained information and consultative relations with UNESCO
- It is a federated member of the International Social Science Council.
- Its aim is to promote personal contacts and mutual understanding among economists via scientific meetings, common research programs and publications.



UNSC, NSG BIDS GET FURTHER SUPPORT

The Netherlands expressed strong intent to back India's early entry into the NSG, Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group- the export control regimes- as also for a permanent UN Security Council seat.

India's bid

India applied for membership of the NSG in 2008, but its application hasn't been decided on yet. Major reason for this is the insistence of NSG for the members to be signatories of NPT (Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty) or other nuclear moratoriums on testing. India is not a signatory, yet it has received a special waiver to conduct nuclear trade with all nuclear exporters.

- India, Pakistan, Israel and South Sudan are among the four UN member states which have not signed the NPT, the international pact aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION IN UN TAX FUND

India has contributed \$ 100,000 to a UN fund to help developing countries actively participate in the discussion of tax issues, becoming the first country to make the contribution.

About UN Tax Fund:

The Trust Fund for International Cooperation in Tax Matters was established in July 2006, in order to support the activities of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

Through the fund, the UN expects that more developing countries will draw upon the best practice of other bodies, ensuring that global tax cooperation norms and rules will work more effectively and efficiently for all countries and all stakeholders.

NSG

Membership: 48

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a multinational body concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be used for nuclear weapon development.

- It also endeavors to improve safeguards and protection on existing materials.
- Interestingly, the NSG was set up in 1974 as a reaction to India's nuclear tests and to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes.

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The UN Tax Committee, a subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council (ESOSOC), has provided guidance on current issues such as double taxation treaties, transfer pricing (profit shifting) taxation of the extractive industries and taxation of services.

The committee also provides a framework for dialogues with a view to enhancing and promoting international tax cooperation among national tax authorities, while making recommendations on capacity-building and the provision of technical assistance to developing counties and countries with economies in transition.

The Addis Agenda provides a global framework to ensure the effective mobilisation of resources at the national and international level for sustainable development.

Addis Ababa is a city in Ethiopia (Eastern Africa)

Implementation of the Addis Agenda supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the historic and transformational agenda that countries unanimously adopted in 2015.

GENERAL STUDIES-3

INDIAN ECONOMY

STATES' FISCAL HEALTH DETERIORATING

Report by: 'Handbook of Statistics on States 2016-17' by RBI.

Coverage: Covers all sub-national statistics on socio- demographics, state domestic product, agriculture, industry, infrastructure, banking and fiscal indicators across the states over a period ranging from 1950-51 to 2016-17. It also includes data on state-wise parameters of power sector, Roads and railways.

Performance of the states

- The gross fiscal deficits of all the states skyrocketed to Rs 4,93,360 crore in fiscal 2016 from Rs 18,790 crore in FY1991.
- Uttar Pradesh > Rajasthan > Maharashtra > Gujarat

Reasons

Ongoing and upcoming spending commitments include:

1. Public sector wages-pensions increased in FY16-17, following the Seventh pay commission's (PC) proposals.
2. The interest burden from a funding scheme for distressed power distribution companies (UDAY initiative) will also weigh on the books. Under this arrangement, States took over 75 per cent of the outstanding debt of the companies in a staggered manner in FY15-16

Fiscal deficit

A fiscal deficit occurs when a government's total expenditures exceed the revenue that it generates, excluding money from borrowings. Deficit differs from debt, which is an accumulation of yearly deficits.

Fiscal consolidation

Fiscal Consolidation refers to the policies undertaken by Governments (national and sub-national levels) to reduce their deficits and accumulation of debt stock.

Fiscal prudence

Fiscal Prudence means being conservative when estimating your revenues but accounting for the unforeseen when estimating your expenditure. It means presenting the most unflattering view of your assets and liabilities.

Fiscal stimulus

Fiscal stimulus consists of attempts by governments or government agencies to financially stimulate an economy. An economic stimulus is the use of monetary or fiscal policy changes to kickstart growth during a recession. Governments can accomplish this by using tactics such as lowering interest rates, increasing government spending and quantitative easing, to name a few.



and FY16-17. Interest due on this debt will lift revenue expenditure from FY16-17 onwards.

3. The rollout of the Goods and Services Tax.
4. Farm loan waivers add to the pressure.

Revenue depletion

More than half of the States' total revenues are raised through taxes, primarily sales taxes and excise duties, which have been moderating in recent years. The other source of revenue support is aggregate transfers from the Centre, which comprises States' share of central taxes and grants-in-aid. Last year, the States' share in the Centre's pool of taxes was raised from 32 per cent to 42 per cent. Nevertheless, the benefit was offset by lower grants.

This meant that in exchange for higher tax transfers, the Centre lowered its funding support for centrally sponsored schemes (CSS), obliging States to fund their own programmes.

SECURITY NOD FOR GSTN

The Goods and Service Tax Network (GSTN), the IT backbone of the Goods and Service Tax (GST) got a security clearance from the Home Ministry.

Backgrounder:

Though the GSTN has been operational, it had not got the security clearance — a mandatory requirement as it has private participation.

What you need to know about GSTN?

GSTN is a private, not-for profit company in which the central government and states and Union territories together hold 49%. The rest is owned by financial institutions.

- The company will provide information technology support to all stakeholders for smooth implementation of the new taxation regime across the country and will be the repository of all information related to taxation and entities registered under GST.
- GSTN will mobilize working capital by levying a user fee on state governments for its services.

AGRICULTURE AND CROPPING PATTERNS

DRAFT REGULATIONS FOR ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

FSSAI has drafted regulations for organic food products. It seeks to ensure that these food items are actually organic. This move comes in the backdrop of rising demand for organic food products, being considered as healthy.

Need

Consumers do not have any way to check the authenticity of organic food products due to lack of a regulatory framework. Yet, a lot many products have been marketed as organic.

Draft provisions:

- Mandatory labelling of organic foods should convey full and accurate information on the organic status of the product.
- Products should also carry a certification mark or a quality assurance mark given by any of the notified certification bodies.
- Organic foods will have to comply with the provisions under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) administered by the government or the Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India) run by the Agriculture Ministry or any other standards notified by the food authority.
- Exemption from verification compliance to those foods marketed through direct sale by the original producer or producer organisation. However, this exemption does not apply to processed organic products.

Organic food products

Organic food products are either those grown under a system of agriculture without the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides or made from organically produced raw materials.

Food Safety and Standards

Authority of India

FSSAI was set up in 2011 under the Food Safety and Standard Act, 2006.

- It lays down standards for food articles and regulates their manufacturing, storage, distribution, sale and import.
- Its powers include licensing and surveillance of food and beverages outlets, enforcement of safety regulations across registered food vendors and ensuring safety of imported food items, their standards and labelling.



5 NEW UNILATERAL ADVANCE PRICING AGREEMENT ENTERED IN TO

In news

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) entered into Five Unilateral Advance Pricing Agreement with Indian taxpayers. Also, a Bilateral Advance Pricing Agreement involving United Kingdom has also been signed.

What are APAs?

The APA Scheme strives to provide a sense of certainty to taxpayers in the domain of transfer pricing by specifying the methods of pricing and determining the arm's length price of international transactions in advance for the maximum of five years. Further, the taxpayer can also rollback the APA for four preceding years. This would result in tax certainty for a total period of nine years. The APA scheme has attracted tremendous interest among Multi National Enterprises (MNEs). An APA can be unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral.

Benefits:

- Certainty with respect to tax outcome of the tax payer's international transactions, by agreeing in advance the arm's length pricing or pricing methodology to be applied to the tax payer's international transactions.
- No hassles of audits and tax deliverance in time based on the prior agreed levels
- Reduction of compliance costs and administrative costs

Transfer pricing

Transfer pricing is the setting of the price for goods and services sold between controlled (or related) legal entities within an enterprise. For example, if a subsidiary company sells goods to a parent company, the cost of those goods is the transfer price.

Arm's length price

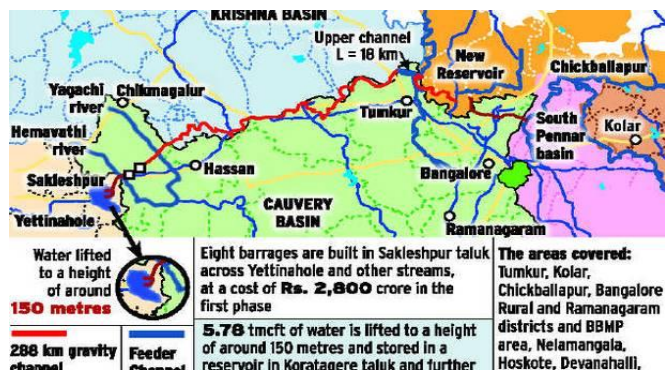
The price at which two unrelated and non-desperate parties would agree to a transaction. This is most often an issue in the case of companies with international operations whose international subsidiaries trade with each other. For such companies, there is often an incentive to reduce overall tax burden by manipulation of inter-company prices. Tax authorities want to insure that the inter-company price is equivalent to an arm's length price, to prevent the loss of tax revenue.

INDUSTRY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

YETTINAHOLE PROJECT IN KARNATAKA

Why in news?

The land acquisition for the project hit a hurdle in the Hassan district, as farmers expressed their unhappiness with the price chart fixed. This would mean that there will be a slowdown in the completion of the project. The prices have been fixed under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act.



Yettinahole project:

The project envisages pumping water from Yettinahole and a couple other tributaries of River Netravathi to drought prone Chikkaballapur, Tumkur and Bangalore rural districts.

- It involves construction of dams and reservoirs and filling of lakes.

NEW URBAN AGENDA AND SMART CITIES

The New Urban Agenda(NUA) was set this year (2017) with the 26th UN-Habitat governing council conference (GC26)

What is NUA?

It aims to be the international community's foremost guide for sustainable urban development over the next 20 years.

- It signifies a paradigm shift in global thinking that our future is urban.
- It seeks to bring in gender-equity, youth-empowerment, participatory planning and inclusive public space and inclusive growth.



- It tries to establish an integrated approach to urbanization so as to set a clear vision of how urban economies, standards of living and climate sustainability are interconnected.

Overlapping of NUA and Smart cities

The smart city guidelines mandate cities to adhere to 24 features in order to be called “smart”. There is a significant overlap between these features and the commitments of the NUA.

1. Emphasis on promoting civic engagement and strengthening participatory local governance
2. While the SCM has promoted the concept of municipal bonds, the NUA calls for sustainable financial frameworks for municipal finance and local fiscal systems.
3. Both the NUA and the SCM focus on city redevelopment like solid waste management, compact urban planning and energy resources.

End note:

As India makes its strides in the world economy that is inclined towards urbanisation, a well charted out strategy would augur well for India’s prospects. SCM is a step in the right direction, but there is a need to refocus on the functioning of urban local bodies when it comes to centrally motivated schemes like the SCM and hence, grant sufficient autonomy to ULBs. The NUA rightly stresses this aspect of governance and the Government would do well to learn from the NUA framework.

I3 (INNOVATE IN INDIA) FOR BIOPHARMA INDUSTRY

After announcing the National health Policy which commits Health for all, the Government has approved a Biopharma Mission for production of Indigenous affordable and accessible vaccine, Biotherapeutics and Medical devices. A US\$250 m Mission with US\$125 m coming as a World Bank funding, the mission I3 is “Innovate in India” for Biopharma.

Ministry responsible: Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and Ministry of Science & Technology in collaboration with World Bank.

Implemented by: Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a Public Sector Enterprise, set up by DBT.



Details

It is a first- of-its-kind mission that brings together industry and academia to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the biopharmaceutical sector.

- This Mission aspires to create an enabling ecosystem to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the sector.
- The programme will specifically focus on the development of new vaccines, bio-therapeutics, diagnostics and medical devices to better address the rising burden of diseases in the country.
- It will also bring isolated Centres of excellence together, enhance regional capabilities.

NEW HYDROCARBON POLICY: OALP

Marking a paradigm shift in the hydrocarbon exploration policy, the government has launched the National Data Repository (NDR) along with the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP).

What is OALP?

It is a part of government's Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)

- The new policy gives exploration companies the option to select the exploration blocks on their own, without having to wait for the formal bidding round.
- The company then submits an application to the government, which puts that block up for bid.

What is HELP then?

The Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP) opens up India's entire sedimentary basin for investments from domestic and foreign players under a simplified, transparent regime.

- The new policy provides Investors access to huge amount of seismic data available in National Data Repository (NDR)
- With OALP, flexibility to carve out exploration acreages will be increased

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Details

- ✓ A Single, uniform license for extraction and exploration for all types of hydrocarbon prospects.
- ✓ Simpler and easier to administer Revenue Sharing Model.
- ✓ Full marketing freedom and free pricing for crude oil and natural gas.
- ✓ Exploration allowed during entire contract period.
- ✓ Zero royalty rates for deep water & ultra-deep water blocks for first 7 years.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

A ROCKET TO STUDY INTERSTELLAR CLOUDS

NASA's Colorado High-resolution Echelle Stellar Spectrograph(CHESS), a sounding rocket, is being launched to study the vast interstellar clouds and know about the earliest stages of star formation.

Interstellar space

The space between distant stars is filled with clouds of neutral atoms and molecules, as well as charged plasma particles called the interstellar medium. This medium has the capability to evolve, over millions of years, into new stars and even planets.

Details about CHES

It will measure light filtering through the interstellar medium, which provides crucial information for understanding the lifecycle of stars.

SCORPENE CLASS TO GET UPGRADES

The Indian Navy plans to upgrade all the 6 Scorpene submarines with Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) modules in order to extend their endurance.

Air-independent propulsion : AIP is any technology which allows a non-nuclear submarine to operate without the need to access atmospheric oxygen (by surfacing or using a snorkel).



- A submarine is about stealth. It is a weapons platform not visible to the naked eye. AIP significantly improves stealth because it enables a submarine to generate electricity for services and battery charging and propulsion while completely submerged.
- Another advantage is that the Non-nuclear submarines running on battery power or AIP can be virtually silent.

FOLDABLE WALKING ROBOT

Scientists from South Korea have built the first foldable walking robot, named 'DeployBot', that pops up certain parts only when deployed, and could be used for future space missions as well as seabed exploration on Earth.

- The main advantage is the robustness in various environments due to lack of mechanical systems such as motors and gears. Thus, problems such as sealing and lubrication of mechanical systems in water or space environments, would be eliminated.

LIGHT SWITCH EFFECT AT URANUS

Voyager 2 spacecraft of NASA has discovered that Uranus' magnetosphere – the region of magnetic field and the material trapped inside it – does work like a light switch every day as it rotates along with the planet.

How is it possible?

The magnetosphere of this icy planet is 'open' in one orientation, allowing solar wind to flow into it. It is later "closed", forming a shield against the solar wind and deflecting it away from the planet.

Not strange though

Reconnection of magnetic fields is a phenomenon throughout the solar system. It is one reason for the Earth's auroras.

GENEXPERT

It is a device released by the WHO which can be used to diagnose TB and HIV infections, and quantitatively measure HIV and hepatitis C viral loads.

- This state-of-the-art portable machine is of the size of a microwave oven, which can run molecular tests.

PETYA RANSOMWARE HITS INPT

A global cyber-attack, which is being linked to the WannaCry ransomware, has affected several companies and countries. Operations at a Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust terminal in Mumbai were forced to shut after being impacted in the cyber-attack.

Why in news?

The ransomware virus includes code known as "Eternal Blue", which cyber security experts widely believe was stolen from the US National Security Agency (NSA) and was also used in last month's ransomware attack, named "WannaCry".

Ransomware

A piece of malicious software which takes control of your system and files. Upon taking over, it applies encryption on those files and asks for money for a key that can restore the files. The ransomware often scrambles file



What can be done to prevent this?

The best way to protect your computer is to create regular backups of your files. The malware only affects files that exist in the computer. If you have created a thorough backup and your machine is infected with ransomware, you can reset your machine to begin on a clean slate, reinstall the software and restore your files from the backup.

SECURITY CHALLENGES

NEPOL FOR NORTHEAST

Northeastern Police Organisation (NEPOL) is a proposed police organization by the North-eastern states and West Bengal, which would work on the lines of International Police Organization (INTERPOL). Such an organization would greatly facilitate cooperation between the states of the region in tackling insurgency, cross border crime and smuggling.

Why is it required?

Several militant groups in the Northeast have joined ranks to form an umbrella organization called United Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFW). Leading groups in the organization include United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit). The organisation has been found responsible for perpetrating several strikes on security forces.

Another reason why such concerted effort is required is the nature of border sharing with other countries. Hence, cooperation among the police forces between the states is necessary.

TENSIONS SOAR IN DOKLAM PLATEAU

Even as the border dispute simmers between India and China, a road being built by China in Doklam in Bhutan, has made the region tense.

Beijing has accused India of having a “hidden agenda” hinting that New Delhi is trying to stop it from building the road on Bhutan’s behalf. Bhutan has lodged a formal protest asking China to stop work on the road.

The Doklam dispute

Doklam, also called Donglang, is under Chinese control, but is also claimed by Bhutan. It is located at a tri-junction of India, Tibet and Bhutan and is close to the Nathu La pass, through which China has



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blocked this year's Kailash Mansoravar yatra or pilgrimage over the border tension with India.

- Doklam is disputed territory and Bhutan has a written agreement with China that pending the final resolution of the boundary issue, peace and tranquility should be maintained in the area.
- The disputed area also provides, according to India perspective, a bigger buffer to its sensitive Chicken's Neck, or the Siliguri Corridor, which is an extremely narrow stretch of land that connects the north-eastern region to the rest of India. From the Chumbi Valley it is just a little over 100 kilometres away.

Significance of this territory:

The Doklam Plateau, north of the tri-junction between Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet by Indian claim, is not just a disputed area, but has huge strategic significance for both India and China.

For Chinese to reach the China-Bhutan border posts, Doklam provides an easy way to construct their road, and they have been trying to do so and India has consistently objected to it. Not very far from Doklam is the strategically important Chumbi Valley in the Tibetan region, to which Chinese are now planning to expand their rail connectivity.