

## **General Studies-1**

### **Zojila Tunnel**

#### **Why in News?**

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will attend the commencement of work on Zojila Tunnel on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway at an event in Jive-tsal in Leh tomorrow.

He will also lay the foundation stone for Srinagar Ring Road and Jammu Ring Road at separate events at Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), Srinagar and at General Zorawar Singh Auditorium in Jammu the same day.

#### **About the Tunnel:**

The 14 km long Zojila tunnel will be India's longest road tunnel and Asia's longest bidirectional tunnel.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, had approved the construction, operation and maintenance of this 2-lane bi-directional tunnel with Parallel Escape (Egress) tunnel between Baltal and Minamarg on the Srinagar-Leh section of NH-1A at a total cost of Rs 6800 crore earlier this year.

The construction of this tunnel will provide all weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.

This route remains snow-bound for a large part of the year, and is ravaged by frequent avalanches.

As a result, road connection to places in the Laddakh region stands disrupted for long periods, preventing even essential supplies from reaching people, shutting down businesses, affecting healthcare and education.

#### **Benefits of Tunnel:**

The tunnel will bring relief to the people of this region by providing all weather connectivity.

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It will also cut down the time taken to cross the Zojila pass from the present 3.5 hours to just 15 minutes, besides making the drive much safer and convenient.

The construction of the tunnel is expected to bring about all round economic and socio-cultural integration of these regions.

In addition to direct jobs generated during construction, it will also lead to massive indirect and spinoff jobs due to acceleration of economic growth.

The government is committed to development of manpower skilled for tunnelling jobs in Jammu & Kashmir. The project has strategic and socio-economic importance, and will be an instrument for the development of the economically backward districts in Jammu & Kashmir.

#### **Smart tunnel:**

The Zojila tunnel has been planned as a smart tunnel.

It will have latest safety features like fully transverse ventilation system, Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS), Tunnel Emergency Lighting, CCTV Monitoring, Variable Message Signs (VMS), Traffic Logging Equipment, Over Height Vehicle Detection, Tunnel Radio System, etc.

It will have pedestrian cross passages at every 250 meter and motorable cross passages and lay-bys at every 750 meter. It will have emergency telephones and fire-fighting cabinets at every 125 meter.

#### **Sadharan Brahma Samaj (SBS)**

##### **Why in News?**

Sadharan Brahma Samaj (SBS), the party funded by Rabindranath Tagore's father in the initial years, has entered into a legal battle with the State government over its decision to dissolve the governing bodies of eight colleges in Kolkata run by the organisation.

## **'Non-minority colleges'**

The governing bodies of the eight colleges were dissolved following the decision of the State's Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education Department to not to grant the SBS the status of a minority religion in an order dated September 8, 2017.

The order argued that since SBS is not a "separate minority religion", the related colleges administered by it should be treated as "non-minority Government-aided Colleges."

The order further stated that the governing bodies of the colleges administered by Bramho Samaj Education Society (BSES) — the SBS' education wing — be immediately dissolved.

### **About Sadharan Brahmo Samaj:**

The Brahmo Samaj was formed by Raja Rammohan Roy as an alternative to the prevalent trends of Hinduism on August 20, 1828.

Due to ideological differences, Keshab Chandra Sen, one of its key leaders, formed a separate organisation called the Bramho Samaj of India in 1866.

The SBS was formed at a public meeting in May 15, 1878, at the Town Hall in Kolkata, following differences between its founders and Mr. Sen.

Ananda Mohan Bose, Shibchandra Deb and Umeshchandra Datta were the key leaders of SBS. Debendranath Tagore, father of Rabindranath Tagore was actively involved with the organisation.

### **Census and Statutory towns:**

There are 2,231 villages that are likely to be declared new census towns for the upcoming census, says a recent study by the Centre for Policy Research (CPR).

Census towns are an anomaly that burst into the limelight during the last census in 2011.

**Criterion for Census Town:**

They are settlements which are larger (at least 5,000 people) and, denser (at least 400 people per sq. km) than most villages, with at least three-fourths of their male population not working in agriculture.

They are still governed like villages by rural panchayats, unlike statutory towns which are governed by urban local bodies (ULBs).

The census has been tracking this phenomenon since 1961.

But their growth was relatively low, touching 1,362 census towns by 2001.

However, in the 2011 census, there were 2,600 new census towns, taking the total to almost 4,000. West Bengal has the most, with Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh also having large numbers.

In May 2016, the Union Ministry of Urban Development had written to the States, recommending that they convert all identified census towns into statutory ULBs in order to promote planned urban development.

However, the CPR researchers warn that across-the-board conversion into ULBs could hurt more than help. "Often, census towns are actually better governed than smaller statutory towns," said Mr. Pradhan.

**Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project:**

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project and laid the Foundation Stone of the Pakal Dul Power Project in Jammu & Kashmir today.

akal Dul, with 1000 MW capacity, will be the largest Hydro Power Project in Jammu & Kashmir on completion. It is also the first storage Project in Jammu & Kashmir.

330 MW Kishanganga Hydro Electric Project, located in Bandipora District of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is a run of river scheme.

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Kishangana H.E. Project will provide a free power of 13 per cent to the state, which will be around Rs. 133 crore per year.

There are other benefits to the state like- Employment to the people of J&K, infrastructure development etc.

It is estimated that the project engaged about 1850 local persons during construction stage and 750 local persons during operation stage through direct and indirect employment.

The Project was handed over to NHPC for execution by the State Government after an MoU was signed between J&K Govt. and Ministry of Power, Govt of India in July 2000.

Pakal Dul project will have immense benefits for J&K. Around 3000 persons shall be employed directly/ indirectly during construction phase of the project. Further, around 500 persons shall be employed directly/indirectly during operation phase of the Project.

It has been agreed that the Govt. of J&K shall be getting 12 per cent free power after 10 years of commissioning of the Project and water usage charges as applicable. Additional 1 per cent free power will go towards Local Area Development Fund (LADF). Govt. of J&K has first right to purchase balance power of NHPC (49%) & PTC (2%). Furthermore, local population will be benefitted by the improvement and widening of roads and improvement of bridges under the Project.

**130 years of Indian Railways iconic station: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus building**

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (earlier Victoria Terminus) has completed 130 years of its construction on 20th May 2018.

The present day Headquarters building of Central Railway popularly known as Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus) is an architectural marvel.

This magnificent monument was originally planned as the office of GIP (Great Indian Peninsular) Railway.

This is the most photographed building after Taj Mahal, and was designed by Frederick William Stevens, a consulting architect.

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Stevens designed the monumental Terminus which was the largest building then erected in Asia and which even today is a standing testimony of his innovative talent.

The construction started in 1878 and on jubilee Day in 1887, it was named after Queen Empress Victoria.

Later in 1996, it was renamed as Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. It was again renamed as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in July 2017.

In 2004, UNESCO has enlisted this building as **World Heritage Site** for its architectural splendour.

From December 2012, this heritage building has been opened for public viewing on working days.

**Architecture:**

- i. Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (earlier Victoria Terminus) is designed in Gothic style adapted to suit Indian context.
- ii. It is a C shaped building planned symmetrically about the east west axis.
- iii. The crowning point of the whole building is the central main dome carrying up a colossal 16'-6" high figure of lady pointing a flaming torch upwards in her right hand, and a spoked wheel low in the left hand, symbolizing 'Progress'.
- iv. This dome has been reported to be the first octagonal ribbed masonry dome that was adapted to an Italian Gothic style building.

During Centenary celebrations of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus Building, a postal stamp was released. In 2013, when the building celebrated quasi-centennial (125 years) anniversary, a special postal cover was released on the occasion.

## **General Studies-2**

### **Bharosa**

#### ***Why in News?***

Aimed at empowering vulnerable and marginalised women by imparting skills training, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will soon set up a skill development centre at 'Bharosa,' an integrated support centre for distressed women and children in Hyderabad.

#### **About Bharosa:**

- 'Bharosa,' an initiative of Hyderabad City Police, is a state-of-the-art centre to support women and children who are victims of violence. Since its inception in 2016, a total of 3,560 victims have approached 'Bharosa' centre with a range of problems.
- 'Bharosa' provides under one roof, 24X7 services related to police, medical, legal, prosecution, psycho-therapeutic counselling and relief and rehabilitation services in completely private counselling rooms to maintain confidentiality and privacy.
- The centre is equipped with well-trained staff and modern gadgets, including facilities like video conferencing, so that the victims need not go to the court.

#### **About UNDP:**

- Headquartered in New York City, UNDP advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.
- The status of UNDP is that of an executive board within the United Nations General Assembly.
- The UNDP Administrator is the third highest-ranking official of the United Nations after the United Nations Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General.
- The UNDP Human Development Report Office also publishes an annual Human Development Report.

***Important functions:***

- It provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries. It promotes technical and investment cooperation among nations.
- To accomplish the SDGs and encourage global development, UNDP focuses on poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS, democratic governance, energy and environment, social development, and crisis prevention and recovery.

**Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) Programme**

***Why in News?***

Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) has shipped the first oil cargo for India's strategic petroleum reserve at Mangalore.

***Background:***

- Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL) had then signed an agreement with ADNOC which allows the firm to store 5.86 million barrels of crude in the strategic facility at Mangalore at its own cost.
- India can use the entire available crude oil stored by ADNOC in the Mangalore facility during an emergency situation. The Agreement with ISPRL also allows ADNOC to sell part of the crude oil to Indian refineries on commercial basis while adhering to mutually agreed minimum crude storage which is for the exclusive use of the Indian government.

***About SPR programme:***

- To ensure energy security, the Government of India had decided to set up 5 million metric tons (MMT) of strategic crude oil storages at three locations namely, Visakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur (near Udupi). These strategic storages would be in addition to the existing

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storages of crude oil and petroleum products with the oil companies and would serve as a cushion during any external supply disruptions.

- In the 2017-18 budget, it was announced that two more such caverns will be set up Chandikhole in Jajpur district of Odisha and Bikaner in Rajasthan as part of the second phase.
- The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

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***Need for strategic oil reserves:***

- In 1990, as the Gulf war engulfed West Asia, India was in the throes of a major energy crisis. By all accounts India's oil reserves at the time were adequate for only three days. While India managed to avert the crisis then, the threat of energy disruption continues to present a real danger even today.
- It is unlikely that India's energy needs will dramatically move away from fossil fuels in the near future. Over 80% of these fuels come from imports, a majority of which is sourced from West Asia. This is a major strategic risk and poses a massive financial drain for an embattled economy and its growing current account deficit.
- To address energy insecurity, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government mooted the concept of strategic petroleum reserves in 1998. Today, with India consuming upwards of four million barrels of crude every day (January 2015 figures), the case for creating such reserves grows stronger.

In January 2016, India signed a deal with the United Arab Emirates that allows the Gulf OPEC country to fill half of the underground crude oil storage facility of ISPRL at Mangalore. Therefore, the UAE's Abu Dhabi National Oil Company will store about 6 million barrels of oil at Mangalore.

## **Atal Pension Yojana**

Atal Pension Yojana (APY) Scheme's subscriber base crossed 1 Crore on completion of 3 years of the Scheme launch. APY was launched by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi at a function in Kolkata on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 and the current number of subscribers stands at 1.10 Crore

### **About APY**

Under the APY, the guaranteed minimum pension of Rs. 1,000/- or 2,000/- or 3,000/- or 4,000/- or 5,000/- per month will be given at the age of 60 years depending on the contributions by the subscribers.

The Spouse of the Subscriber is also eligible for pension and the nominee would be receiving the accumulated pension wealth.

## **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).**

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved setting up of a new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Deoghar, Jharkhand. A provision of funds worth Rs. 1103 crore has been approved for the project and the said AIIMS will be set up under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).

### **Impact:**

The setting up of new AIIMS at Deoghar will serve the dual purpose of providing super speciality health care to the population while also helping to create a large pool of doctors and other health workers in this region to be available for primary and secondary-level institutions/facilities being created under the National Health Mission (NHM).

### **Background:**

Under the PMSSY, AIIMS have been established in Bhubaneswar, Bhopal, Raipur, Jodhpur, Rishikesh and Patna. Work of AIIMS Rae Bareilly (U.P.), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Kalyani (West Bengal) and

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Mangalagiri in Guntur (A.P.) is in progress. Construction work has also been awarded for AIIMS, Gorakhpur (U.P.).

### ***About PMSSY:***

The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) was announced in 2003 with objectives of correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/ reliable tertiary healthcare services and also to augment facilities for quality medical education in the country.

- It is a central sector scheme.
- The scheme has two components: Setting up of new AIIMS and upgradation of government medical colleges.

### **.Employment Generation :**

- Setting up new AIIMS in various states will lead to employment generation for nearly 3000 people in various faculty & non-faculty posts in each of the AIIMS. Further, indirect employment generation will take place due to facilities & services like shopping centre, canteens, etc. coming in the vicinity of new AIIMS.
- The upgradation programme is carried out in selected Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) by agencies appointed by the Government of India under the direct supervision of the Central Government. Post-Graduate seats and additional faculty posts as per norms will be created and filled up in these GMCs by the respective State/UT Governments.
- The construction activity involved for creation of the physical infrastructure for the various new AIIMS and Government Medical Colleges' upgradation projects being undertaken under the scheme is also expected to generate substantial employment in the construction phase as well.

Further, following AIIMS have also been sanctioned:

- Bathinda, Punjab in July 2016
- Guwahati (Assam), May 2017
- Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh) in January 2018

## **Swachh Survekshan 2018**

Shri Hardeep Puri, Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs has congratulated the winners of Swachh Survekshan 2018 while announcing the results at the National Media Centre here today.

The Swachh Survekshan 2018 assessed 4203 Urban Local Bodies and was organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), under the aegis of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).

The exercise undertaken between 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018 to 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 enhanced the scope to cover a record number of Urban Local Bodies impacting around 40 crore urban citizens across length and breadth of the country by 2700 assessors.

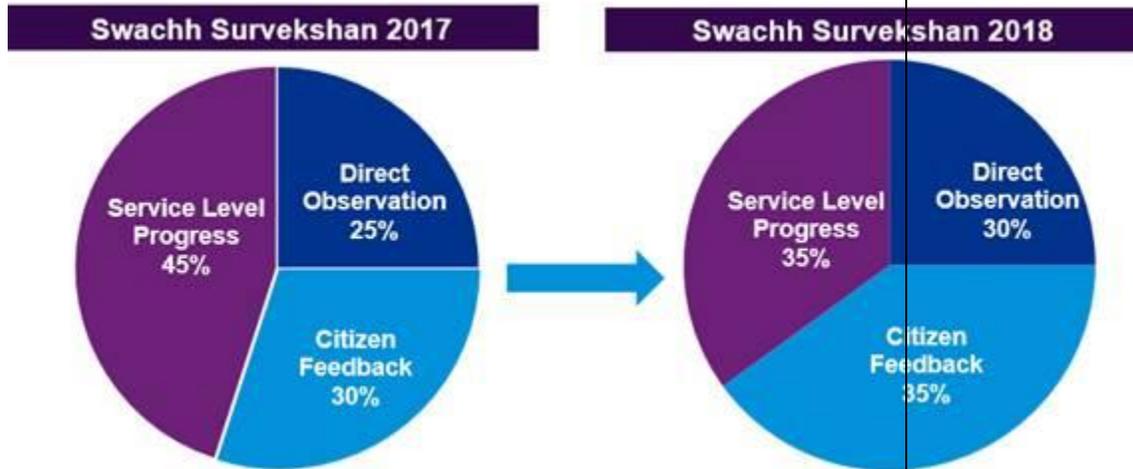
As compared to 2017 where Swachh Survekshan was conducted in 434 cities, this year the scope was enhanced manifold. .

The on-field survey for Swachh Survekshan has been conducted by an independent agency and the data for ranking of the cities collected from 3 sources:

- a. **Service Level Progress**: To verify whether systems and processes are in place in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to implement Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) in the most efficient way.
- b. **Direct Observation**: To verify and assess general cleanliness in the cities by making random field visits in different parts of the city and public conveniences (Community/Public Toilets).
- c. **Citizens Feedback**: To collect feedback directly from citizens and monitor the performance of Swachhata App, a citizens grievance Mobile App.

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The overall and component wise weightage for Swachh Survekshan-2018 had a shift from Swachh Survekshan-2017 weightages. The weightages are produced below :



Under 'Service Level Progress', Swachh Surveksan-2018 has introduced one more component 'Innovation and Best Practices' in addition to existing five components .

**Venture Capital Symposium 2018**

NITI Aayog, in association with Vision India Foundation, is organising the Venture Capital Symposium 2018 to deepen the economic relationships between France and India.

Following the visit of French President Emmanuel Macron, 20 of the biggest French venture capital and private equity funds are coming to India to explore investment opportunities.

**About the Symposium:**

The Venture Capital Symposium 2018 is a three day event where the French investors will be interacting with 100 early to mid-stage Indian start-ups.

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This event was attended by various investors from France including Safran Ventures, Eren Group, Luxury Tech, Fashion Capital, Educlever, Olymp Capital, Affectio Familiae, Brands and beyond, Galileo Partners, Winevestworld, TNP, Claranova among others.

Four investor groups - Eren Group, Claranova, Olymp Capital and TNP - made announcements of setting up offices in India and commitments to invest in various sectors such as energy, aerospace, blockchain and Internet of Things.

The event facilitates interactions between French investors, Indian investors, Indian start-ups and critical government functionaries.

The French investors will explore the investment landscape as well as the socio-cultural richness of India.

The Venture Capital Symposium 2018 aims to support the Start-up India programme that was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

**Green Good Deeds to be in the official agenda of BRICS Ministerial on Environment in Brazil and Russia**

Green Good Deeds, the societal movement launched by Environment, Forest & Climate Change Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan to protect environment and promote good living has found acceptance by the global community.

Dr Harsh Vardan at the ongoing 4th BRICS Environment Ministerial in Durban, South Africa had urged the BRICS nations to jointly help in development of a social movement to fight for the protection and conservation of environment.

There was wide acceptance to the suggestion and UN Environment Programme representative at the conclave Jorge Laguna Celis, acting Deputy Executive Director lauded the initiative.

The minister had launched a nationwide social movement to protect the environment and promote healthy living.

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The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change had drawn up a list of over 500 Green Good Deeds and asked people to alter their behaviour to Green Good Behaviour to fulfil their Green Social Responsibility.

These small positive actions to be performed by individuals or organisations to strengthen the cause of environmental protection, were put on a mobile application named "Dr Harsh Vardhan App".

The minister had formally launched the nation-wide campaign in January 2018. He enlisted the cooperation of thousands of people – students, teachers, voluntary organisations, Residents Welfare Associations, professionals to adopt these deeds.

### **Trans Fats in Diet:**

The WHO recommendation is that people consume less than 1% of their energy from transfat.

This translates to 2.2 grams for a 2,000 calorie diet. In some countries, and for some populations within some countries, exposure may be five times higher than that.

### **Just how harmful are transfats? How does it affect children?**

Artificial transfat raises bad cholesterol and lowers good cholesterol and is estimated to kill 540,000 people a year around the world. Transfat is harmful across the life course.

### **What disease burden does it translate into for India?**

Published estimates are that transfat kills more than 60,000 people a year in India. However, there is currently limited data on what the level of exposure and consumption is in India.

### **If not stopped what could the "abuse" of transfat mean for India?**

If the WHO-recommended REPLACE package isn't implemented in India, there will be lakhs of deaths and heart attacks that could have been prevented. Fortunately, the Government of India has

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indicated their commitment to eliminating industrially produced transfat in advance of the WHO target date of 2023.

The REPLACE action package proposes to provide countries with 'tools' to eliminate industrially produced trans fats from their national food supplies.

### **What are these tools?**

The six-step action package shows the way to elimination. This includes examples of regulations and laws that can be adapted to the local context, guidelines for testing of food and human serum to determine levels of exposure, technical assistance to promote healthier oils, and examples from countries around the world that have already eliminated trans fat.

The Government of India, through the FSSAI [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India], has required a reduction to 5% trans fat in certain oils. The global best practice is a maximum of 2% in all oils, fats, and all foods. No formal decision has yet been made by the Government of India for complete elimination.

### **Strategic Petroleum Reserve**

#### **Why in News?**

In a first, today, India received the 1<sup>st</sup> cargo of UAE crude oil for filling up one of the two Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) caverns built by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Ltd (ISPRL) at Mangalore.

In February 2018, during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to UAE, ISPRL and ADNOC signed an Agreement under which ADNOC will store about 5.86 million barrels of crude oil in India's SPR facility at Mangalore at its own cost.

The filling up began with the 2 million barrels reaching Mangalore today. ADNOC will bring additional crude oil and fill up the Mangalore cavern later this year.

ADNOC's investment by way of crude oil in Indian SPR facility is the first time that a private foreign entity, is filling up an Indian SPR cavern with crude oil.

### **About SPR Programme:**

Government of India under phase I of SPR programme has built crude oil storage facilities with total capacity of 5.33 million tonnes (around 39 million barrels) at three locations viz. Vishakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur.

Vishakhapatnam storage has a capacity of 1.33 million tonnes (around 9.77 million barrels) of crude oil, Mangalore has a capacity of 1.5 million tonnes (around 11 million barrels) and Padur can stock 2.5 million tonnes (18.37 million barrels).

The entire Vishakhapatnam facility and one of the two caverns at Mangalore facility have been filled with crude oil under government funding, the second cavern at Mangalore facility is now being filled by ADNOC of UAE at its own cost under the Agreement with ISPRL.

The Agreement stipulates that during an emergency oil shortage situation the Indian government can use the entire available crude oil stored by ADNOC in the Mangalore SPR facility for its use.

Further, as an incentive for storing crude oil at its own cost, the Agreement allows ADNOC to sell part of the crude oil to Indian refineries during normal times.

### **India-UAE Relations:**

The historic first cargo from UAE for filling up India's SPR facility demonstrates the commitment of both India and UAE in executing strategically important agreements in a time bound manner, thereby, further strengthening the strategic relationship between the two countries, particularly in the oil and gas sector.

It is a culmination of the vision of the leaders, HRH the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Prime Minister Modi to elevate the bilateral relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership and transform the buyer-seller relations to a two-way investment relations.

UAE is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest crude oil source for India and supplies around 6 % of the petroleum requirement.

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With the recent acquisition of 10% stake in UAE's Lower Zakhum offshore producing field by Indian public sector oil and gas companies and the investment by ADNOC in Indian SPR facility, the hydrocarbon sector engagements between India and UAE have transformed from buyer-seller relationship to strategic partners in the energy sector.

## **General Studies-3**

### **States Startup Ranking Framework**

With the aim to foster competitiveness and to propel the States and Union Territories to work proactively towards promotion of their Startup eco-systems, the States Startup Ranking Framework was launched by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

This was also targeted at facilitating States/UTs to identify, learn and replicate good practices from each other and for bringing to fore, their own progress in the regard.

States and UTs have participated enthusiastically in this first ever State Startup Ranking exercise.

A total of 30 States and UTs have participated in this exercise whose last date for submission of documents was 30<sup>th</sup> April.

It is encouraging to note enthusiastic participation from majority of north-eastern and hill States as well, where the Startup ecosystem is still nascent.

The participating States and UTs shall now be evaluated on a score of 100, against 38 action points categorized into 7 areas of intervention such as Startup Policy and implementation, Incubation support, Seed Funding, Angel and Venture Funding, Simplification of Regulations, Easing Public Procurement and Awareness & Outreach.

DIPP has appointed seven dedicated evaluation committees involving members from all relevant departments and reputed players in the ecosystem, for evaluating States' responses in each area of intervention.

The launch of the ranking framework has galvanized the States into action, thereby giving impetus to the Startup movement across the country.

### **Micro Irrigation Fund (MIF)**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi today has approved an initial Corpus

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of Rs.5,000 crore for setting up of a dedicated "Micro Irrigation Fund" (MIF) with NABARD under Pradhan MantriKrishiSinchayeeYojana (PMKSY).

**Details:**

- The allocation of Rs. 2,000 crore and Rs. 3,000 crore will be utilised during 2018-19 and 2019-20 respectively. NABARD will extend the loan to State Governments during this period. Borrowings from NABARD shall be paid back in 7 years including the grace period of two years.
- The lending rate under MIF has been proposed at 3% lower than the cost of raising the fund by NABARD.
- This cost shall be met from the ongoing scheme of PMKSY-PDMC by amending the existing guidelines
- The total financial implication on interest subvention comes to about Rs 750 crore.

**Benefits:**

- The dedicated Micro Irrigation Fund would supplement the efforts of Per Drop More Crop Component (PDMC) of Pradhan MantriKrishi Sinchayee Yojana in an effective and timely manner.
- With the additional investment for micro irrigation accessing MIF, innovative composite/ commodity/ community/ cluster based micro irrigation projects/ proposals may bring about 10 lakh ha.
- The Fund will facilitate States to mobilise resources for their initiatives, including additional (top up subsidy) in implementation of PMKSY-PDMC to achieve the annual target of about 2 Million ha/year during the remaining period of 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission under Per Drop More Crop Component of PMKSY as recommended by the Group of Secretaries.

## **Implementation Strategy and targets:**

States may access MIF for innovative integrated projects, including projects in the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode and also for incentivizing micro irrigation through an additional (top up) subsidy over and above the one available under PMKSY-PDMC Guidelines and for covering additional areas. It should not be a substitute for State's share in PMKSY-PDMC.

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Farmers Producers Organization (FPO)/Cooperatives/State Level Agencies can also access the funds with State Government Guarantee or equivalent collateral. Farmers Co-operatives may access this fund for innovative cluster based Community Irrigation Projects.

### **Coverage:**

The approval shall have Pan India coverage.

With the operation of MIF, it is expected that the States which are lagging behind in adoption of Micro Irrigation would also be encouraged to take advantage of the fund for incentivizing farmers as being done by the good performing States.

Besides, community driven and innovative projects to be taken up by the States would bring additional coverage of Micro Irrigation.

### **Rationale:**

- To facilitate the States in mobilising the resources for expanding coverage of Micro Irrigation by taking up special and innovative projects
- To incentivise micro irrigation beyond the provisions available under PMKSY-PDMC to encourage farmers to install micro irrigation systems

## **National Policy on Biofuels – 2018.**

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved National Policy on Biofuels – 2018.

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### **Salient Features:**

- i. The Policy categorises biofuels as "Basic Biofuels" viz. First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel and "Advanced Biofuels" - Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.
- ii. The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of Sugarcane Juice, Sugar containing materials like Sugar Beet, Sweet Sorghum, Starch containing materials like Corn, Cassava, Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.
- iii. Farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase. Taking this into account, the Policy allows use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- iv. With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels, the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Bio refineries of Rs.5000 crore in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels.
- v. The Policy encourages setting up of supply chain mechanisms for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, Used Cooking Oil, short gestation crops.
- vi. Roles and responsibilities of all the concerned Ministries/Departments with respect to biofuels has been captured in the Policy document to synergise efforts.

### **Expected Benefits:**

- **Reduce Import Dependency:** One crore lit of E10 saves Rs.28 crore of forex at current rates. The ethanol supply year 2017-18 is likely to see a supply of around 150 crore

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litres of ethanol which will result in savings of over Rs.4000 crore of forex.

- **Cleaner Environment:** One crore lit of E-10 saves around 20,000 ton of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. For the ethanol supply year 2017-18, there will be lesser emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> to the tune of 30 lakh ton. By reducing crop burning & conversion of agricultural residues/wastes to biofuels there will be further reduction in Green House Gas emissions.
- **Health benefits:** Prolonged reuse of Cooking Oil for preparing food, particularly in deep-frying is a potential health hazard and can lead to many diseases. Used Cooking Oil is a potential feedstock for biodiesel and its use for making biodiesel will prevent diversion of used cooking oil in the food industry.
- **MSW Management:** It is estimated that, annually 62 MMT of Municipal Solid Waste gets generated in India. There are technologies available which can convert waste/plastic, MSW to drop in fuels. One ton of such waste has the potential to provide around 20% of drop in fuels.
- **Infrastructural Investment in Rural Areas:** At present Oil Marketing Companies are in the process of setting up twelve 2G bio refineries with an investment of around Rs.10,000 crore. Further addition of 2G bio refineries across the Country will spur infrastructural investment in the rural areas.
- **Employment Generation:** One 100klpd 2G bio refinery can contribute 1200 jobs in Plant Operations, Village Level Entrepreneurs and Supply Chain Management.
- **Additional Income to Farmers:** By adopting 2G technologies, agricultural residues/waste which otherwise are burnt by the farmers can be converted to ethanol and can fetch a price for these waste if a market is developed for the same. Also, farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase. Thus conversion of surplus grains and agricultural biomass can help in price stabilization.

**Background:**

In order to promote biofuels in the country, a National Policy on Biofuels was made by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy during the year 2009. Globally, biofuels have caught the attention in last decade and it is imperative to keep up with the pace of developments in the field of biofuels.

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Biofuels in India are of strategic importance as it augers well with the ongoing initiatives of the Government such as Make in India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill Development and offers great opportunity to integrate with the ambitious targets of doubling of Farmers Income, Import Reduction, Employment Generation, Waste to Wealth Creation.

Biofuels programme in India has been largely impacted due to the sustained and quantum non-availability of domestic feedstock for biofuel production which needs to be addressed.

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**IP Nani**

The Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Suresh Prabhu launched the Intellectual Property (IP) mascot – IP Nani – at the conference on National Intellectual Property Rights Policy in New Delhi today. An anti-piracy video featuring Mr. Amitabh Bachchan was also launched by the Minister at the event.

**About IP-Nani:**

Mascot IP Nani is a tech-savvy grandmother who helps the government and enforcement agencies in combating IP crimes with the help of her grandson "Chhotu" aka Aditya. The IP mascot will spread awareness about the importance of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) among people, especially children, in an interesting manner.

This character is also in line with the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) campaign for the World IP Day which celebrates the brilliance, ingenuity, curiosity and courage of the women who are driving change in our world and shaping our common future. It also highlighted that how a strong IP system can support innovative and creative women and indeed everyone in their quest to bring their amazing ideas to the market.

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IPRs are increasingly becoming crucial drivers of social and economic growth by encouraging creativity and innovation. Realizing the importance of IPRs, the National IPR Policy was approved by the Union Cabinet on 12th May 2016.

The first and foremost objective of the Policy is “IPR Awareness: Outreach and Promotion”.

Under this objective, one of the key focus areas is awareness on IPR for school children, as it is essential to nurture creativity and the ability to innovate starting out from a young age.

In this context, the Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM), a professional body under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) collaborated with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EU-IPO) to produce a series of animated videos on IPRs for children with IP Nani as their central character.

**About CIPAM:**

Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) has been created as a professional body under the aegis of DIPP to take forward the implementation of the National IPR Policy that was approved by the Government in May 2016, with the slogan – “Creative India; Innovative India”.

Functions: CIPAM is working towards creating public awareness about IPRs in the country, promoting the filing of IPRs through facilitation, providing inventors with a platform to commercialize their IP assets and coordinating the implementation of the National IPR Policy in collaboration with Government Ministries/Departments and other stakeholders.

**SE becomes India's first exchange to be recognized as a DOSM by the US SEC**

Asia's first stock exchange, the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) has become the first stock exchange in India to have received recognition as a 'Designated Offshore Securities Market' (DOSM) from the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

*Benefits:*

The DOSM status allows the sale of securities to U.S. investors through the trading venue of BSE without registration of such securities with the US SEC and thus eases the trades by US investors in India.

*Background:*

Prior to this recognition, investors who wished to sell such securities (i.e., equity or debt securities issued by BSE listed companies in a private placement under the U.S. securities laws) had to take certain measures to ascertain the location of the purchaser prior to re-selling.

*The availability of a liquid resale market is expected to:*

- Make exempt offerings by BSE-listed companies more attractive to U.S. investors.
- Enhance the attractiveness of Indian Depository Receipts (IDRs) amongst US investors.

**Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) spacecraft mission**

India is among the hotspots where overuse of water resources has caused a sharp decline in the availability of freshwater, according to a first-of-its-kind study using an array of NASA satellite observations of the earth.

Scientists led by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in the U.S. used data on human activities to map locations where the availability of freshwater is rapidly changing.

**Observations:**

Areas in northern and eastern India, West Asia, California and Australia are among the hotspots where overuse of water resources has caused a serious decline in the availability of freshwater, the study said.

In northern India, groundwater extraction for irrigation of wheat and rice crops has led to depletion, despite rainfall being normal throughout the period studied, the report said.

The fact that extractions already exceed recharge during normal precipitation does not bode well for the availability of groundwater during future droughts, the researchers said.

**About GRACE:**

The team used 14 years of observations from the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) spacecraft mission, a joint project of NASA and the German Aerospace Center, to track global trends in freshwater in 34 regions around the world.

The GRACE mission was selected as the second mission under the NASA Earth System Science Pathfinder (ESSP) Program in May 1997. Launched in March of 2002, the GRACE mission mapped variations in Earth's gravity field. Designed for a nominal mission lifetime of five years, GRACE operated in an extended mission phase till 2017.

GRACE consists of two identical spacecraft that fly about 220 kilometers (137 miles) apart in a polar orbit 500 kilometers (310 miles) above Earth. GRACE maps Earth's gravity field by making accurate measurements of the distance between the two satellites, using GPS and a microwave ranging system.

**Permanent Residency Status (PRS) scheme**

Two years after it was launched by the Union government, the Permanent Residency Status (PRS) scheme providing a host of facilities for foreigners who invest at least Rs. 10 crore under the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) route is yet to find a single applicant.

## **Inflows dip**

From April to December 2017, the FDI inflow stood at Rs. 2,31,457 crore, a decrease from Rs. 2,40,385 crore for the corresponding period in 2016.

Most European Union countries, the U.S., Canada and others offer permanent residency to foreign investors.

The U.S. offers the EB-5 visa programme where foreigners could apply for permanent residency if they created employment opportunities for 10 people with a minimum investment of Rs. 6.5 crore.

An official said this was not a “citizenship” that was being offered to foreigners and was subject to review every 10 years.

## **About PRS**

The Union Cabinet had cleared the PRS in 2016 to boost its “Make in India” policy.

The scheme is open for foreign investors who invest a minimum of Rs. 10 crore within 18 months or Rs. 25 crore in 36 months.

The foreign investment should result in generating employment to at least 20 resident Indians in every financial year.

PRS will be granted for a period of 10 years with multiple entry and can be renewed for another 10 years.

There will be no requirement of registration with the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO),” the Home Ministry document on the scheme said.

The PRS card holders are also eligible to buy residential property in India.

Among foreign countries, the maximum investment proposals in critical sectors such as telecom and defence that was cleared by Home Ministry in 2017, were from China, the U.K., the U.S. and Mauritius.

## **Security clearance**

Last year, the Ministry gave security clearance to more than 1,071 proposals in 11 critical sectors like defence, telecommunications, information and broadcasting.

Over 90% of the FDI proposals have come through the automatic route, an official said. Among the foreign countries, the U.S., China (including Hong Kong), Mauritius and the U.K. have received the green signal for the most number of projects at 10 each, followed by Germany at six, Bangladesh at three and Italy, Israel, Netherlands and Switzerland at two each.

## **Mission Innovation**

Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, Environment, Forests and Climate Change Dr. Harsh Vardhan will be leading an Indian delegation for participation in the Mission Innovation Ministerial being held at Malmo-Sweden during 22-23 May, 2018.

## **About MI:**

Mission Innovation is a global platform of 23 countries and European Union aimed at accelerating clean energy innovations through enhanced Government funding, greater public-private sector partnership and enhanced global cooperation.

India is founding member of Mission Innovation and part of the Steering Committee besides co-lead of innovation challenges on smart grids, off grids and sustainable bio-fuels.

uring the visit, Minister will show case India's commitment to clean energy through research, development and demonstration programmes initiated in partnership with Mission Innovation countries in various domains of clean energy.

The Minister will also explore opportunities for research cooperation with Mission Innovation countries for affordable clean energy innovations. Besides participation in Mission Innovation Ministerial, Dr Harsh vardhan will also hold bilateral meetings with his counter parts from Denmark, Sweden, Canada and European Commission.

## **INSV Tarini completes historic Circumnavigation**

Indian Naval Sailing Vessel Tarini (INSV Tarini) entered Goa harbour and came alongside the INS Mandovi jetty on completion of a historic global circumnavigation voyage on 21 May 18.

### **About the expedition:**

This is the first-ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew. The vessel was skippered by Lieutenant Commander Vartika Joshi, and the crew comprised Lieutenant Commanders Pratibha Jamwal, P Swathi, and Lieutenants S Vijaya Devi, B Aishwarya and Payal Gupta. .

During her 254 day long voyage, the vessel has covered over 22,000 Nautical miles, visiting five countries – Australia, New Zealand, Falkland Islands (UK), South Africa and Mauritius.

The expedition titled 'Navika Sagar Parikrama' is in consonance with the National policy to empower women to attain their full potential. It has showcased 'Nari Shakti' on the world platform and helped change societal attitudes and mindset towards women in India by raising visibility of their participation in challenging environs.

During the course of her voyage, the vessel has met all criteria of circumnavigation, viz. crossing the Equator twice, crossing all Longitudes, as also the three great capes (Cape Leeuwin, Cape Horn and Cape of Good Hope).

The expedition was covered in six legs, with halts at 5 ports: Fremantle (Australia), Lyttleton (New Zealand), Port Stanley (Falklands), Cape Town (South Africa) and Port Louis (Mauritius).

The crew and the vessel encountered rough seas on numerous occasions during the voyage.

The extremely cold climate coupled with stormy weather conditions especially in the Southern Ocean made the task of circumnavigating the globe highly daunting and challenging. The vessel also witnessed winds in excess of 60 knots and waves up to 7 meters high, whilst crossing the Pacific Ocean.

### **About INSV Tarini:**

The indigenously-built INSV Tarini is a 56-foot sailing vessel, which was inducted in the Indian Navy in February 2017, and has showcased the 'Make in India' initiative on the International forum.

The crew also collated and updated meteorological, ocean and wave data on a regular basis for accurate weather forecast by India Meteorological Department (IMD), as also monitored and reported marine pollution on the high seas.

They interacted extensively with the local populace, especially children, during the port halts to promote Ocean sailing and the spirit of adventure.

### **Successful Test Firing of Brahmos to Validate Service Life Extension**

BrahMos, supersonic cruise missile was successfully test fired at 1040 hours today from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Balasore, Odisha as part of service life extension programme.

The life extension test firing of BrahMos was conducted from a Static Inclined Launcher, proving the efficacy and longevity of the system which was witnessed by the Scientist from Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and BrahMos.

The precision strike missile flew in its designated trajectory and the key components functioned perfectly.

### **About Brahmos:**

BrahMos is a joint venture between DRDO of India and NPOM of Russia, the highly versatile BrahMos has emerged as the ultimate weapon of choice in modern warfare with its unmatched speed, precision and firepower

### **Nipah virus infection**

#### **Why in News?**

The Central and State government authorities as well as the medical community have stepped up efforts to contain the threat

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of a possible outbreak of the Nipah virus infection, which has so far claimed at least four lives in Kozhikode district.

### **About Nipah Virus:**

[Nipah Virus](#) is an emerging infectious disease that broke out in Malaysia and Singapore in 1998 and 1999.

It first appeared in domestic pigs and has been found among several species of domestic animals including dogs, cats, goats, horses and sheep. The infection is also known to affect human beings.

The organism which causes Nipah Virus encephalitis is an RNA or Ribonucleic acid virus of the family Paramyxoviridae, genus Henipavirus, and is closely related to Hendra virus.

Nipah virus infection gets its name from the village in Malaysia where the person from whom the virus was first isolated succumbed to the disease.

The virus has been listed in the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code and must be reported to the OIE (OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code).

#### [How does Nipah spread or get transmitted?](#)

The disease spreads through fruit bats or 'flying foxes,' of the genus Pteropus, who are natural reservoir hosts of the Nipah and Hendra viruses.

The virus is present in bat urine and potentially, bat faeces, saliva, and birthing fluids.

Nipah Virus, which is a zoonotic disease, was known to affect humans in Malaysia and Singapore after coming in direct contact with the excretions or secretions of infected pigs.

## Symptoms of the Nipah infection

Typically, the human infection presents as an encephalitic syndrome marked by fever, headache, drowsiness, disorientation, mental confusion, coma, and potentially death.

During the outbreak in Malaysia, up to 50 per cent of clinically apparent human cases died. There is no specific treatment for Nipah Virus. The primary treatment for human cases is intensive supportive care.

## Prevention of the Nipah infection

While there is no vaccine available for the infection, preventive measures can be a key to control the spread.

With fruits bats being the primary cause of infection, the farm animals should be prevented from eating fruit contaminated by bats.

Consumption of contaminated date palm sap including toddy should also be avoided.

Physical barriers can be put in place in order to prevent bats from accessing and contaminating palm sap.

## **Black panther Sighted**

The wildlife wing of Odisha's Forest and Environment Department has recorded the presence of a black panther in a forest in Sundargarh district.

The photographs make Odisha the ninth State in India where the elusive and rare big cat has been seen.

"Black panther or melanistic leopard is a colour variant of the Indian leopard and the footage of this animal has been captured repeatedly by cameras installed in Garjanpahad Reserve Forest of Hemgir Range of Sundargarh Forest Division.

The leopards' skins vary in colour and the jet black melanistic form is called black panther. It is as shy as a normal leopard and very difficult to detect.

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It is mostly found in densely forested areas of southern India.

Although the presence of black panther was reported 26 years ago, no scientific or pictorial records could establish the claim.

Black panthers have also been reported from Kerala (Periyar Tiger Reserve), Karnataka (Bhadra Tiger Reserve, Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve and Kabini Wildlife Sanctuary), Chhattisgarh (Achanakmar Tiger Reserve), Maharashtra (Satara), Goa (Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary), Tamil Nadu (Mudumalai Tiger Reserve), Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.