



C.A Dated On 16-01-2019

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MGNREGA

Why in News?

The Government of India has allocated an additional Rs. 6,084 crore at RE stage to MGNREGA. This brings the total allocation to the scheme to Rs. 61,084 crore in 2018-19, making it the highest ever allocation.

About MGNREGA:

- MGNREGA is a flagship programme of the Ministry which addresses poverty in a holistic manner by overcoming social inequalities and creating a base for sustainable & long term development.
- Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is transforming rural India into a more productive, equitable and connected society.
- It has provided nearly 235 crore person days in the last three years, each year.
- This year as well, it will be around the same making it four years of consistent high performance on wage employment with durable assets for sustainable livelihoods.

Progress Made:

- Over the last 4 years, the Ministry of Rural Development has completed major reforms in the MGNREGA to transform it into a resource for sustainable livelihoods for the poor.
- Generation of payments within 15 days was done only in 26.85% cases in 2014-15 and barely 29.44 lakh assets were completed in that year.

Future Prospects:

The Government is committed to MGNREGS for improving the lives of the poor households through a well governed programme with a thrust on durable assets, sustainable livelihoods and infrastructure for the poor.



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More financial resources will be asked for if needed, at the time of the Final Estimates, depending on the demand for wage employment.

Womaniya on Government e Marketplace

What is it?

Government e Marketplace [GeM] has launched “Womaniya on GeM”, an initiative to enable women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups [WSHG] to sell handicrafts and handloom, accessories, jute and coir products, home décor and office furnishings, directly to various Government ministries, departments and institutions.

Objectives:

- The initiative seeks to develop women entrepreneurship on the margins of society to achieve gender-inclusive economic growth.

How will It help?

- Nearly 80 percent women-owned establishments are self-financed and more than 60 percent of 8 million units are owned and or led by women entrepreneurs from socially-challenged sections of the society.
- Since women tend to invest up to 90 percent of their earnings back in their families to provide better nutrition, health care and education to their children, economic empowerment of women is a step in the direction of poverty alleviation.
- Womaniya on GeM will spur hyper-local economic opportunities for women entrepreneurs and address goals and objectives under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

How will it work?

- Womaniya homepage will inform procurement officers in various government ministries, departments and CPSEs about the drive to promote



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procurement of common use goods and services from women entrepreneurs.

- Products like handicrafts and handloom, accessories, jute and coir products, home décor and office furnishings are categorized for ease-in-procurement.
- The initiative aligns with Government's initiatives for MSMEs, especially to reserve 3 percent in government procurement from women entrepreneurs.

About GeM:

- Government e Marketplace is a 100 percent government owned company setup under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry for procurement of common use goods and services by Government ministries, departments and CPSEs.
- GeM was setup in 2016 and has 731,431 product categories, with 180,862 registered sellers and 32,114 government buyers.

Women of India Organic Festival

The Ministry of Women and Child Development aims to encourage Indian women entrepreneurs and farmers to connect with more buyers through organizing 'Women of India Organic Festivals' across the country.

Background:

The Women of India Organic Festival has been held annually in New Delhi since 2015 and has made its debut in Chandigarh this year to showcase the varied products of women farmers and entrepreneurs

Purpose of WOIF:

- Through this festival, the Ministry also aims to educate people about its various initiatives and schemes relating to women and children development..
- It would empower them through financial inclusion, while promoting organic farming in India.

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National level Initiatives in the field of science communication



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The Department of Science and Technology (DST) along with Doordarshan (DD), Prasar Bharati today launched two science communication initiatives, DD Science and India Science.

About the Initiative:

- While DD Science is an one-hour slot on Doordarshan National channel, which will be telecast Monday to Saturday from 5 pm to 6pm.
- India Science is a internet-based channel, which is available on any internet-enabled device, and will offer live, scheduled play and video-on-demand services.

Aim of the initiative:

- The two science communication platforms are National level initiatives to elevate science into a celebration and bring it close to everyday life.

About the Channel:

- DST and DD aim to make them jewels in the crown of the country for serving humanity for the furtherance of science.
- The channels have been conceived and supported by the DST and are being implemented and managed by Vigyan Prasar, an autonomous organisation of DST.
- The two science channels which are milestones in the history of science communication in India, are the first step in creating a national science channel for the country.
- While India Science (www.indiascience.in) is already a 24x7 presence, DD Science may also be scaled up to a full-fledged channel in the future.
- The two channels will have science-based documentaries, studio-based discussions, and virtual walkthroughs of scientific institutions, interviews and short films and will be completely free to access.

Chang'e-4 Mission

Why in News?

A cotton seed carried to the Moon by China's recent Chang'e-4 probe has sprouted, the first for any biological matter to grow on the Moon.

Details:



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- On January 3, China's robotic spacecraft Chang'e-4 landed on the far side of the moon, a first in the human history of space exploration.
- The 1.3-tonne lander, which made a soft landing on the Moon, carried the seeds of cotton, oilseed rape, potato and arabidopsis, as well as eggs of the fruit fly and some yeast, to form a simple mini biosphere, according to a team led by scientists from Chongqing University in southwest.

Background:

- Plants have been grown on the International Space Station before but never on the Moon.

Advantages:

- The ability to grow plants on the Moon will be integral for long-term space missions, like a trip to Mars which would take about two-and-a-half years.
- It would mean that astronauts could potentially harvest their own food in space, reducing the need to come back down to Earth to re-supply, the *BBC* reported.
- The plants are kept in a sealed container on board the Chang'e-4 lander.
- The crops will try to form a mini biosphere — an artificial, self-sustaining environment.

About the Experiment:

- The lunar mini biosphere experiment on the lander is designed to test photosynthesis and respiration — processes in living organisms that result in the production of energy.
- The whole experiment is contained within an 18 cm tall, 3 kg canister that was designed by 28 Chinese universities, the *BBC* said.

New species of Gecko discovered:

Why in News?

Not just remote forests, even crowded cities could be hiding new species.

Researchers have discovered six new species of bent-toed geckos – a type of small lizard – from northeastern India, and one of them is from Assam's capital, Guwahati.



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Details:

- While researchers found the Guwahati bent-toed gecko (*Cyrtodactylus guwahatiensis*, named after the city) near a small hillock in the urban sprawl of Guwahati city.
- Kaziranga bent-toed gecko, the Jaintia bent-toed gecko and the Nagaland bent-toed gecko have been discovered from Assam's Kaziranga National Park, the Jaintia hills of Meghalaya and Khonoma village in Nagaland, respectively.
- The Abhayapuri bent-toed gecko is currently found only in the vicinity of Abhayapuri town in Assam's Bongaigaon district, and the Jampui bent-toed gecko, only in Tripura's Jampui Hills.
- All the new lizards belong to the genus *Cyrtodactylus* and are called bent-toed or bow-fingered geckos, named after their bent toes.

Unknown natural history

- These species are known only from a single locality each, and nothing is known of their natural history, ecology or distribution except that they are nocturnal and live on rocks.
- They are likely to be narrowly distributed endemic species.
- The discovery increases the number of bent-toed geckos described from the Himalaya and north-eastern India to 15 (nine of which have been described this year alone). Since 2017, more than 20 new species of bent-toed geckos have been described from Myanmar, too.
- These new discoveries are a result of surveying areas that have never been sampled before from within the Indo–Burma biodiversity hotspot.