



News Analysis (08 Feb, 2019)

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Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund

Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved a corpus of **Rs. 2,000 crore for Agri Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF)** to be created with **NABARD** for development and upgradation of agricultural marketing infrastructure in rural agricultural markets.

- The Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund was **announced in 2018 Budget** for developing and upgrading agricultural marketing infrastructure in the **22,000 Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)** and **585 Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC)**.
- At present, GrAMs are being developed from **MGNREGA fund**.
- The scheme being **demand-driven**, progress will depend on demand from states

NABARD

- **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** came into existence on the **recommendation of B. Sivaraman Committee**.
- It was approved by the **Parliament through Act of 1981** and came into **existence in 1982** by transferring the agricultural credit functions of RBI and refinance functions of the then Agricultural Refinance and Development Corporation (ARDC).
- **Functions** of NABARD:
 - NABARD gives high priority to projects formed under the **Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)**.
 - It provides finance to **support poverty alleviation** programs run by IRDP.
 - It also makes the service area plan to provide backward and forward linkages and infrastructural support.
 - It seeks to **establish linkages between Self-help Group (SHG)** that are organized by voluntary agencies for poor and needy in rural areas and other official credit agencies.
 - It finances projects under the '**National Watershed Development Programme**'

and the **'National Mission of Wasteland Development'**.

- It also **supervises the cooperative banks** and **Regional Rural Banks** to periodically ensure the development of the rural financing and farmers' welfare.

Objectives

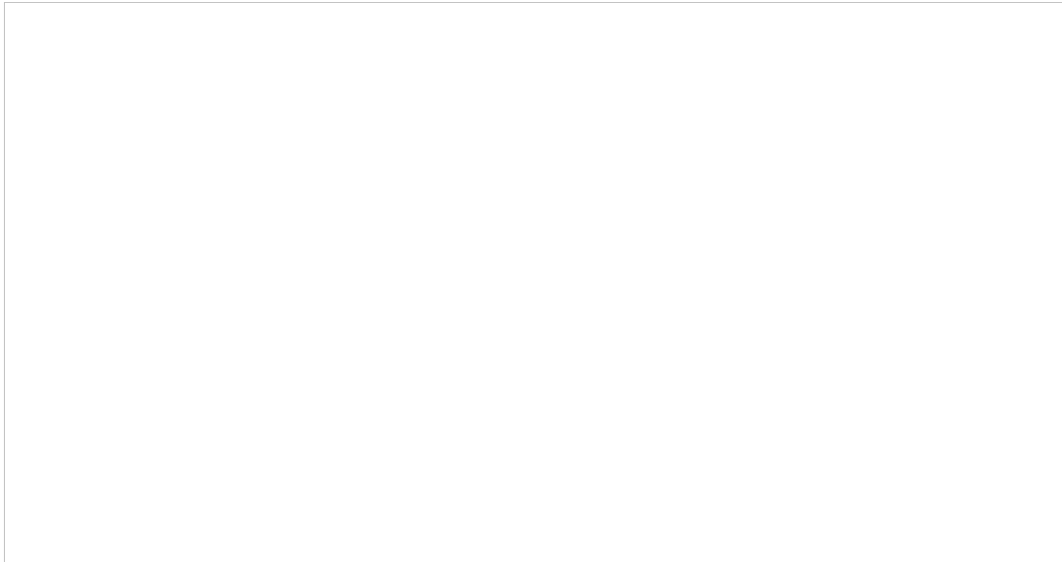
- The fund will provide **subsidised loans to states and Union Territories** for 585 APMC mandis and 10,000 GrAMs.
- States can also utilise this fund for innovative integrated market infrastructure projects, including hub and spoke model and in private-public partnership mode.

Significance

- More than **86% of farmers in India are small and marginal** who are not always in a position to directly transact at APMCs and other wholesale markets.
 - A network of rural godowns enables small farmers to enhance their holding capacity in order to sell their produce at remunerative prices and avoid distress sales.
 - Accordingly, Government of India launched **'Grameen Bhandaran Yojana' in 2001**, which has been subsumed into **"Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure (AMI)" from 2014**.
 - Main objectives of scheme include **creation of scientific storage capacity** with allied facilities in rural areas to meet out various requirements of farmers for storing farm produce, processed farm produce, agricultural inputs, etc.
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International Intellectual Property (IP) Index: US Chamber of Commerce

Acknowledging the **improvement in India's innovation ecosystem**, the **US Chamber of Commerce** has moved India up eight places in its **international intellectual property (IP) index by ranking it 36th amongst 50 countries in 2019**.



- The improvement in India's performance is a result of specific reforms, including its **accession to the WIPO Internet Treaties, the agreement to initiate a patent prosecution highway with international patent offices, a dedicated set of IP incentives for small businesses, and administrative reforms to address the patent backlog.**
- However, the report noted that there were still substantial challenges regarding the country's patenting and IP enforcement environment.
- The **seventh edition titled "Inspiring Tomorrow"**, analyses the IP climate in 50 world economies, based on 45 indicators critical to an innovation-led economy.

World Intellectual Property Organisation

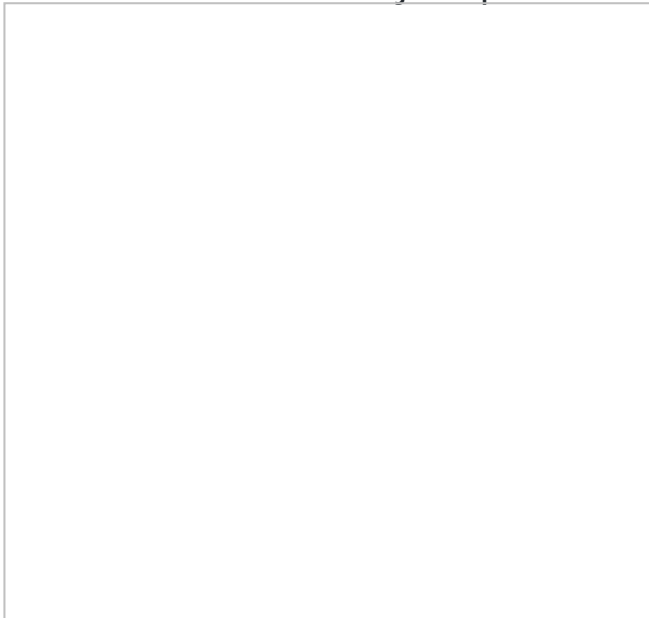
- WIPO is the global forum for intellectual property services, policy, information and cooperation. It is a self-funding agency of the United Nations, with 189 member states.
- Its mission is to lead the development of a balanced and effective international intellectual property (IP) system that enables innovation and creativity for the benefit of all.
- Its mandate, governing bodies and procedures are set out in the WIPO Convention, which **established WIPO in 1967.**
- Some agreements under the ambit of WIPO:
 - **Marrakesh Treaty** for visually impaired patients
 - **Patent cooperation treaty** in 1970
 - **Madrid system**
- Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

Important Facts for Prelims (8th February 2019)

Statue of Guru Padmasambhava

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik unveiled a **19-foot-high statue of Guru Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism**, at Jirang in Gajapati district, Odisha.
- This 29 tonne stone statue is placed in the middle of 'Padma Sarovar', a large tank near **Padmasambhava Mahavihara, the largest Buddhist monastery in eastern India**.
- **The Dalai Lama had inaugurated Padmasambhava Mahavihara monastery in 2010**. Tibetan refugees settled in this region over six decades ago.
- Historians claim that **Guru Padmasambhava, also known as second Buddha, was born and brought up in Odisha before he left for Tibet**.
- The statue of Guru Padmasambhava has been sculpted by noted sculptor Padmashri Prabhakar Moharana.

Rail tunnel for Vizhinjam port connectivity



- A 10.7-km railway line, including a 9.02-km tunnel, has been proposed to connect Balaramapuram station on the **Kanyakumari-Thiruvananthapuram railway line** to the upcoming **Vizhinjam International Multipurpose Deepwater Seaport**.
- It will be the **second longest railway tunnel of the country on completion after the Pir Panjal Tunnel which is in Jammu and Kashmir**.
- The development of the Balaramapuram railway station is being explored as part of the rail link to the seaport.

Ladakh's Dard Aryan Tribes

- **Dard Aryan tribe** of Ladakh has requested the central government to intervene to

protect their culture and legacy.

- The 'Dard' is derived from a **Sanskrit word, 'Daradas'**, which refers to **people who live on hillsides**.
- Dard Aryan — **believed to be the original descendants of 'pure Aryan race'** — tribe is known for its liberal customs and ornate costumes. Many researchers believe that the 'Aryans of Ladakh' or the 'Brokpas' were a part of Alexander's army and had come to the region over 2,000 years ago.
- They live in the villages of Dha and Hanu (commonly called as Dhahanu), Darchik, and Gahanu - situated 163km southwest of Leh, the administrative capital of Ladakh.
- The rich heritage of the Dard Aryans is under threat **due to rapid modernization, migration and religious conversion**.

MarCo Cubesat

- NASA has lost contact with its **two mini-satellites Mars Cube One (MarCO) named as MarCo-A and MarCo-B**.
- MarCo CubeSats were launched along with InSights Mission to serve as communication relays during its Mars landing.
- **After InSight's landing, these spacecraft were launched further on their own trajectories to test if such low-cost technology can operate in deep space.**
- CubeSats are a class of spacecraft based on a standardized small size and modular use of off-the-shelf technologies.
- All previous CubeSats have orbited the Earth. **MarCO was the first attempt to orbit another planet.**



Lunar Lander Beresheet

- An **Israeli nonprofit group** is aiming to lead the first privately funded mission to land a probe on the moon.
- The lunar lander named as **Beresheet** (Hebrew word: "Genesis") will be launched by the group **SpaceIL in support with Israel Aerospace Industries**.
- It will carry instrumentation to **measure the magnetic field of the moon**, a **laser-reflector provided by NASA** and a **time-capsule of cultural and historical Israeli artifacts**.

Ujjwala Utsav

- The oil industry has observed Ujjwala Utsav celebrate the role played by all stakeholders – District Nodal Officers, Policymakers, Distributors, and beneficiaries – in making Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) a success.
- The event was organized under the aegis of **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas**.
- PMUY anthem – Ujjwala Bharat Ujjwala- was also launched during the event.

Atal Bhujal Yojana

- Recently, the **World Bank has approved Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY), a Central Sector, Rs.6000 Crore scheme**, for sustainable management of groundwater with community participation.
- The **funding pattern is 50:50 between Government of India and the World Bank**.

- The identified over-exploited (OE) and water-stressed areas for the implementation of the scheme fall in the States of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
 - **ABHY envisages active participation of the communities in various activities such as the formation of 'Water User Associations', monitoring and disseminating ground water data, water budgeting, preparation & implementation of Gram-panchayat-wise water security plans and IEC activities related to sustainable groundwater management.**
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