



News Analysis (30 Aug, 2019)

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North East Rural Livelihood Project

The North East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP) has empowered the poor and improved the lives of people in about 3,00,000 rural households in Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.

About North East Rural Livelihood Project

- Launched in **2012**, the NERLP is a **World Bank aided**, multi-state ₹683 crore project under the **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)**.
- The project has been implemented in 11 districts of **Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim** with an aim to improve rural livelihoods especially that of women, unemployed youth and the most disadvantaged, in the four North Eastern States.
- There are **four components** to the Project:
 - Social empowerment
 - Economic empowerment
 - Partnership development
 - Project management
- The specific project **objectives** are to :
 - Create sustainable community institutions around women **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**, Youth Groups of men and women (YG) and Community Development Groups (CDG).
 - Build capacity of community institutions for self governance, bottom up planning, democratic functioning with transparency and accountability.
 - Increase economic and livelihood opportunities.
 - Develop partnership of community institutions for natural resource management, microfinance, market linkages, and sectoral economic services.
- The project also works in partnerships with expert organizations to focus on **cluster development through value chain**.

Outcomes

- It has **impacted the lives of about 18 lakh population**, with creation of common economic assets (including rural infrastructure) worth around total Rs. 136 crores.
- Under the project, 10,462 **boys and girls have been trained in various job skills** and 5,494 of them are employed as of now.
- Various activities have been undertaken by CDGs such as reclamation of wasteland, construction of check-dams, plantation, horticulture projects etc.
- Livelihood activities pursued by SHG members have increased considerably, thus **increasing family incomes**.
- **Women have become more knowledgeable** and expressive and display better leadership qualities.

Source: PIB

Domestic Demand and Economy's Animal Spirits

The **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI)** annual report for the year 2018-19 has stated that the low domestic demand is holding back the animal spirits of the economy.

Animal spirit is a term used by the famous British economist, John Maynard Keynes, to describe how people arrive at financial decisions, including buying and selling securities, in times of economic stress or uncertainty.

Insights from the Report

- The report emphasized the need for the **revival of consumption** and **investment** pattern in the economy during 2019-20.
- It claimed that the slowdown could be **cyclical** in nature rather than a deep structural one. But there are some crucial **structural issues in land, labour, & agricultural marketing** that require urgent reforms.
- Banks are recovering, but **Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)** have irrational exuberance and considerable overleveraging.
- Cases of frauds reported by banks saw a 15% jump in 2018-19 on a year-on-year basis.

State of the Economy

- There is a broad-based **cyclical downturn** in several sectors of the economy like, manufacturing, hotels, trade, transport, communication and broadcasting, construction, and agriculture, which **need urgent structural reforms**.
- **Farm sector** also requires crucial intense reforms such as reforms in cold storage facilities and the market mechanism, in order to **double the farmer's income by**

2022.

- The **investment rate** (measured by the ratio of gross capital formation to GDP) had **fallen** to 32.3% in 2017-18, which is a cause of worry and needs grave attention.
- The Gross **Non-Performing Assets** (GNPA) ratio of the banking system declined to 9.1% in March this year from 11.2% in the previous year, which is a healthy sign for the financial system.
- Banks are **staging recovery** because of several reforms initiated in the past such as, **Recapitalization, & Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).**
- In 2018-19, retail electronic payment transactions increased by 59% to Rs 23.3 billion from Rs 14.6 billion in the previous year, resulting in an **increase in the share of electronic transactions** in the volume of retail payments.

Required Reforms

- Reviving **consumption demand** and **private investment** is the need of the hour. It may involve:
 - Strengthening the banking and non-banking sectors,
 - Increased spending on infrastructure,
 - Implementation of much **needed structural reforms** in the areas of labour laws & taxation.
 - Other legal reforms, which will enhance the **Ease of Doing Business** in India.
 - Faster implementation of capital expenditures by public authorities and **similar other measures as announced by the Finance Ministry** recently in this regard have the potential to inject growth impulses into the economy.

Source: TH

Compensatory Afforestation Fund

The Union Environment Ministry has transferred ₹47,436 crore to 27 States for afforestation. The funds are long-pending dues, **part of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF)**, that has been collected for nearly a decade as **environmental compensation from industry**.

- The funds transferred are in addition to State Budget. The centre expects that states will utilize the funds towards forestry activities to achieve the objectives of the **Nationally-Determined Contributions (NDCs)** of increasing forest & tree cover.
- The Fund will be used as per provisions of the CAF Act and Rules.

Compensatory Afforestation Fund

- The CAF Act was passed by the centre in 2016 and the related rules were notified in

2018.

- The CAF Act was enacted to manage the funds collected for compensatory afforestation which till then was managed by **ad hoc Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)**.
Compensatory afforestation means that every time forest land is diverted for non-forest purposes such as mining or industry, the user agency pays for planting forests over an equal area of non-forest land, or when such land is not available, twice the area of degraded forest land.
- As per the rules, **90% of the CAF money is to be given to the states while 10% is to be retained by the Centre.**
- The funds can be **used for** treatment of catchment areas, assisted natural generation, forest management, wildlife protection and management, relocation of villages from protected areas, managing human-wildlife conflicts, training and awareness generation, supply of wood saving devices and allied activities.

Source: PIB

Campaign Angikaar and E-Course

The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has launched two initiatives: **Angikaar**, a campaign for behavioural change and **an e-Course** on '**Vulnerability Atlas of India**'.

Campaign Angikaar

- It has been launched for social behaviour change, focusing on issues such as water & energy conservation, waste management, health, tree plantation, sanitation and hygiene **for beneficiaries of completed houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - PMAY (U)**.
 - The campaign will converge with schemes and missions of other Ministries dealing with the stated subjects.
 - The convergence would especially focus on **Ujjwala** for gas connection and **Ayushman Bharat** for health insurance to the beneficiaries of PMAY (U).
- The campaign **will be initiated** in all target cities on **2nd October 2019** commemorating 150th Gandhi Jayanti and **culminate** on the occasion of **Human Rights Day, 10th December, 2019**.

E-course on Vulnerability Atlas

- It is a unique course that offers awareness and **understanding about natural hazards**, helps **identify regions with high vulnerability** with respect to various hazards and specifies district-wise level of damage risks to the existing housing stock.

- The e-course will be a tool for effective & efficient disaster mitigation & management in the field of Architecture, Civil Engineering, Urban & Regional Planning, Housing & Infrastructure Planning, Construction Engineering & Management and Building & Materials Research.
 - Source: PIB
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Two New Species of Eels

Recently, two new species of Marine Eels have been discovered by Estuarine Biology Regional Centre (EBRC) of the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**.

- One of them, a short brown un-patterned Moray Eel, named **Gymnothorax andamanensis**, is found near the south Andaman coast.
10 species of short brown unpatterned moray eels have been discovered in the world, out of which **two were found in Indian waters**.
- Another is a new white-spotted Moray Eel, now named **Gymnothorax smithi**.

Moray Eels

- Moray Eels occur in **all tropical and subtropical seas**, they live in shallow water among reefs and rocks.
- They are known for **two types of jaws**: one is regular (oral) jaws with big teeth and the second jaw is called the pharyngeal jaw (which drags prey inside the eels stomach).
- There **IUCN red list** status is **Least Concern**.

Zoological Survey of India

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), a subordinate organization of the **Ministry of Environment and Forests** was **established in 1916**.
- It is a national centre for **faunistic survey** and exploration of the resources leading to the **advancement of knowledge** on the exceptionally **rich faunal diversity of the country**.
- It has its headquarters at **Kolkata** and 16 regional stations located in different geographic locations of the country.

Source: TH

SKOCH Governance Gold Award for DAY-NULM

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) has been conferred the prestigious **SKOCH Governance Gold Award** for its **Portal for Affordable Credit and Interest Subvention Access (PAiSA)**.

DAY-NULM is a flagship mission under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)

- The mission was launched in 2014 and is being implemented by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation.
- It aims to uplift urban poor by enhancing sustainable livelihood opportunities through skill development.
- It is **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
 - Funding will be shared between the Centre and the States in the ratio of 75:25. For North Eastern and Special Category – the ratio will be 90:10.
- Its intended beneficiaries are **urban poor** (street vendors, slum dwellers, homeless, rag pickers); unemployed and differently abled.
 - It also provides for the development of vendor markets and also promotion of skills for vendors through setting up infrastructure and special projects for rag picker and differently abled etc.
 - It provides for employment through Skill Training and Placement through City Livelihood Centres to reduce poverty and vulnerability.
 - It also provides social mobilization and institution development through formation of **Self-Help Groups (SHG)** for training members and hand holding, an initial support of 10, 000 is given for each group.
 - It also provides subsidy to urban poor i.e. interest subsidy of 5% – 7% for setting up individual micro-enterprises with loan of up to 2 lakhs and for group enterprises with loan limit of up to Rs.10 lakhs.
 - It fully funds the cost of construction of shelters for the urban homeless.

Portal for Affordable Credit and Interest Subvention Access (PAiSA).

- It is a centralized IT platform which simplifies and streamlines release of interest subvention under the DAY-NULM.
- It offers end to end online solution for processing, payment, monitoring and tracking of interest subvention claims from banks on a monthly basis.
- The portal has been designed and developed through the Allahabad Bank.

SKOCH Awards

- It was instituted in 2003, and recognises people, projects and institutions that go the extra mile to make India a better nation.

- It recognises the best of efforts in the area of digital, financial and social inclusion, governance, inclusive growth, excellence in technology and applications, change management, corporate leadership, corporate governance, citizen service delivery, capacity building and empowerment.

Source:PIB

A 3.8m-year-Old Skull was Discovered in Northern Ethiopia

Recently, a remarkably complete adult male skull called MRD-VP-1/1 or MRD for short., was found in Ethiopia.

- It is being dubbed as **the face of the oldest species** (ever known yet) that is part of the human evolutionary tree.
- It is the oldest-known member of the **Australopithecus group**.
 - Australopithecine, a pivotal group of early human ancestors, lived between **1.5 and 4 million years ago**.
 - It dates back to a time when our ancestors were **emerging from the trees to walk** on two legs but still had distinctly ape-like protruding faces, powerful jaws and small brains.
- **MRD's species, which was bipedal but may also have been able to move around in trees, was much smaller than modern humans.**
- This species is considered the **direct ancestor of Australopithecus afarensis**, the species are best known from the famous partial skeleton **nicknamed Lucy** unearthed in 1974.
- The 3.2-million-year-old Lucy belonged to a species of hominins (which include humans and their ancestors) called Australopithecus afarensis, the newly investigated skull belongs to the older species Australopithecus anamensis.
- Also after examining the skull it has been found that MRD's species could have coexisted with Lucy's because of a **"speciation event"**.
 - It is possible that a small group of MRD's species became genetically isolated from the rest of the population and evolved into Lucy's species, whose population eventually out-bred MRD's species.
- The finding also helps **bridge a big gap between the earliest-known human ancestors (about 6 million years old) and species like Lucy (2-3 million years old).**
- The evolutionary lineage that led to people **split from the chimpanzee lineage** roughly 6 million to 7 million years ago, gradually acquiring traits such as bipedal walking, flatter face and increased brain size through a succession of species.
- Our species, **Homo sapiens**, appeared roughly 300,000 years ago in Africa.

Source: IE
