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News Analysis (23 Feb, 2021)

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India - Maldives

Why in News

Recently, India and the Maldives have signed a **defence Line of Credit agreement worth USD 50 million.**

The agreement was **signed during the visit by the External Affairs Minister of India to Maldives.**



Key Points

- **Defence Line of Credit:**
 - It was **signed pursuant to the request by the Government of Maldives in April 2013 for India's support and cooperation** in enhancing the capability of the Maldives Defence Forces in maritime surveillance, and subsequent requests in October 2015 and March 2016.
 - It is seen as key to India's and Maldives' strategic interests, particularly **given China's increasing footprint in the Indian Ocean Region.**

- **Assistance to Build Dockyards:**

- A dockyard will be developed at the **Uthuru Thila Falhu (UTF) Naval Base** with Indian assistance, a few miles northwest of Male, which will strengthen the Maldivian defence capabilities.

The agreement is **part of the defence action plan signed in 2016** by then Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom during a visit to India.

- Indicating deepening security cooperation, an agreement to develop, support and maintain a **Maldives National Defence Force Coast Guard Harbour** at Sifavaru was also signed.

India will also support development of other infrastructure needed for the harbour, support the development of communications resources and radar services, and provide training.

- **Countering Terrorism:**

Agreed to convene the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism, countering Violent Extremism and **De-radicalisation** at the the earliest.

- **Review of Infrastructure Projects:**

A number of India-backed infrastructure projects including the National College of Policing and Law Enforcement Studies.

- **Collaboration at Multilateral Bodies:**

Discussed collaboration at multilateral bodies like the General Assembly and Security Council of the **United Nations Organisation**.

- The Maldivian side **assured India of its support for permanent membership of India** at the “expanded and reformed” UN Security Council.
- **India has also extended support for the candidature of the Maldives** for the Presidency of the 76th session of the General Assembly.

- **Cooperation for Police Reforms:**

Noted progress on institutionalising linkages between the police organisations to support collaboration and cooperation in training management and exchange of trainers and trainees.

India - Maldives Relations

- **Geo-Strategic Importance of Maldives to India:**

- **Maldives, a Toll Gate in Indian Ocean:**

- Located at the southern and northern parts of this island chain lies the two important **sea lanes of communication (SLOCs)**.
- These SLOCs are critical for maritime trade flow between the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Hormuz in West Asia and the Strait of Malacca in Southeast Asia.
- Nearly 50% of India's external trade and 80% of its energy imports transit these SLOCs in the Arabian Sea.

- **Part of Important Groupings:** Besides, Maldives is a member of the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** and the **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)**.

- **Cooperation Between India & Maldives:**

- **Security Cooperation:** Through the decades, India has rushed emergency assistance to the Maldives, whenever sought.

- In 1988, when armed mercenaries attempted a coup against President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, India sent paratroopers and Navy vessels and restored the legitimate leadership under **Operation Cactus**.
- India and Maldives conduct the **joint military exercise 'Ekuverin'**.

- **Disaster Management:** The 2004 tsunami and the drinking water crisis in Male a decade later were other occasions when India rushed assistance.

- The Maldives has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Covid-19 assistance and **vaccines delivered** by India among India's all of neighbouring countries.
- When the world supply chains were blocked because of the pandemic, India continued to provide crucial commodities to the Maldives under **Mission SAGAR**.

- **People To People Contact:** Maldivian students attend educational institutions in India and patients fly here for superspeciality healthcare, aided by **a liberal visa-free regime extended by India**.

- **Economic Cooperation:** Tourism is the mainstay of Maldivian economy. The country is now a major tourist destination for some Indians and a job destination for others.

Given the geographical limitations imposed on the Maldives, India has exempted the nation from export curbs on essential commodities.

- **Irritants in Relations:**

- **Political Instability:** India's major concern has been the impact of political instability in the neighbourhood on its security and development.
The February 2015 arrest of Maldives' opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed on terrorism charges and the consequent political crisis have posed a real diplomatic test for India's neighbourhood policy.
- **Radicalisation:** In the past decade or so, the number of Maldivians drawn towards terrorist groups like the Islamic State (IS) and Pakistan-based madrassas and jihadist groups has been increasing.
 - Political instability and socio-economic uncertainty are the main drivers fuelling the rise of Islamist radicalism in the island nation.
 - This gives rise to the possibility of Pakistan based terror groups using remote Maldivian islands as a launch pad for terror attacks against India and Indian interests.
- **China Angle:** China's strategic footprint in India's neighbourhood has increased. The Maldives has emerged as an important 'pearl' in China's "**String of Pearls**" construct in South Asia.
 - Given the uncertain dynamics of Sino-Indian relation, China's strategic presence in the Maldives remains a concern.
 - Also, the Maldives have started using the China card to bargain with India.

Way Forward

- India-Maldives defense cooperation will enhance India's capability to monitor Chinese maritime and naval movements along vital sea lanes of communication that run alongside the Maldives.
- In accordance with the "**Neighbourhood First Policy**" of the government, India remains a committed development partner for a stable, prosperous and peaceful Maldives.

Source:TH

IAEA - Iran Deal over Nuclear Inspections

Why in News

Iran and the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** have agreed to temporary measures to offset Iran's decision to restrict access to inspectors.

In December 2020, Iran's Parliament passed the law demanding a suspension of some inspections if the USA failed to lift sanctions.

Key Points

- **About:**

- Iran will **stop the implementation of the voluntary measures** as envisaged in the **2015 nuclear deal**, as of 23rd February 2021.

- However, Iran will **continue to implement** fully and without limitation its **Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA as before.**

Under a **comprehensive safeguards agreement**, the IAEA has the right and obligation to ensure that safeguards are applied on all nuclear material in the territory, jurisdiction or control of the State for the exclusive purpose of verifying that such material is not diverted to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive.

- No access will be given to the IAEA beyond safeguards of the **Non-Proliferation Treaty**.

- Iran would **deny the IAEA real-time access to footage from surveillance cameras** installed at some sites and, if sanctions are not lifted within three months, delete it.

- **Significance of the Deal:**

- It certainly seems likely to **defuse a mounting sense of crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear activities** and efforts to **breathe new life into the 2015 nuclear deal.**

- It **significantly reduces the impact of a new Iranian law**, passed in 2020, which would have seriously hampered the IAEA's ability to do its work.

- **2015 Nuclear Deal:**

- In 2015, Iran with the **P5+1** group of world powers - the USA, UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany agreed on a long-term deal on its nuclear programme.

- The deal was named as **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** and in common parlance as Iran Nuclear Deal.

- Under the deal, Iran agreed to curb its nuclear activity in return for the lifting of sanctions and access to global trade.

- The agreement allowed Iran to accumulate small amounts of uranium for research but it **banned the enrichment of uranium**, which is used to make reactor fuel and nuclear weapons.

- Iran was also required to **redesign a heavy-water reactor** being built, whose spent fuel could contain plutonium suitable for a bomb and to **allow international inspections.**

Changes agreed under Iran deal to limit nuclear programme



- **USA Abandoning the Deal in 2018:**

- In May 2018, the USA abandoned the deal criticising it as flawed and reinstated and tightened its sanctions.
- Since sanctions were tightened, Iran has been steadily breaking some of its commitments to pressure the remaining signatories to find a way to provide sanctions relief.
- The USA held that it would attempt to force all countries to stop buying Iranian oil and put pressure on Iran to negotiate a new nuclear accord.

- **IAEA's Stand:**

In 2018, an International Atomic Energy Agency's report concluded that Iran's stockpile of uranium and heavy water, as well as its implementation of additional protocols, were "in compliance" with the agreement.

International Atomic Energy Agency

- **About:**

Widely known as the world's “**Atoms for Peace and Development**” organization within the **United Nations** family, the IAEA is the international centre for cooperation in the nuclear field.

- **Establishment:**

The IAEA was created in 1957 in response to the deep fears and expectations generated by the discoveries and diverse uses of nuclear technology.

- **Headquarter:** Vienna, Austria.

- **Objective:**

The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.

In 2005, it was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** for their work for a safe and peaceful world.

- **Functions:**

- It is an **independent international organization** that reports annually to the **United Nation General Assembly**.
- When necessary, the IAEA also reports to the UN Security Council in regards to instances of members' non-compliance with safeguards and security obligations.

Source:TH

IIT Council's Recommendations

Why in News

Recently, the **Institute of Technology (IIT)** Council has constituted four working groups to look at greater **autonomy for the IITs**.

- The decision is in line with the **National Education Policy** recommendation.
- The IITs are seeking autonomy **on the lines of what was granted to the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs)**.

Key Points

- **About :**
 - **Members and Head:**
 - The IIT Council is **headed by the Education Minister.**
 - It includes the **directors of all IITs**, and the chairs of each **IIT's Board of Governors (BoG).**
 - **Objective:**
 - It is meant to **advise** on admission standards, duration of courses, degrees and other academic distinctions.
 - It **lays down policy** regarding cadre, methods of recruitment and conditions of service of employees of all IITs.
- **Working Groups of the Council:**
 - **Group-1:** Graded Autonomy, Empowered & accountable BoG and Director.
 - **Group-2:** Grooming distinguished academics for directorship of IITs.
 - **Group-3:** Reform and restructuring of Academic Senate.
 - **Group-4:** Innovative funding mechanisms.
- **Other Recommendations:**
 - **Use of Technology:**

To constitute a **task force to review use of technology** at all IITs and also to accelerate deployment of digital tools,
 Such as **Blockchain, AI (Artificial intelligence), ML (machine learning), and Cloud Computing.**
 - **Reducing Staff:**

Cutting IIT staff strength to lower levels.
 The IITs currently function so that for every ten students, there is one faculty member. And for **every ten faculty, they have pre-approval for 11 staff.**
 - **Research and Development Fair:**

To organise an **IIT research and development fair** to showcase the quality research work being done by IITs to the industries.
 - **Development Plans:**

Asked the IITs to **develop Institute Development Plans to improve the mobility of faculty between institution** and industry to promote research collaborations.

- **Need of Autonomy:**

- **Better Decision Making:**

- Administrative and financial autonomy helps institutes to take a **valuable decision for the benefit of students and the organisation.**

- In the absence of autonomy, most decisions are taken by bureaucrats, who lack the technical knowledge needed to decide for technical institutes.

- Constructive decisions can be taken only by academicians and experts, while **IITs do not enjoy complete autonomy, they have partial freedom.**

- Recently, **an expert panel**, appointed to recommend measures to better implement reservations at IITs, has proposed that **IITs should be exempted from caste reservations for faculty appointments as they are institutes of national importance.**

- **Improved Responsibility:**

- **Lack of autonomy** not only permits interference, but also creates **divided responsibility**, which inevitably leads to maintenance of the status quo, which in today's India is not desirable.

- With autonomy these institutes would **have full control on their policies and operations**, as well as **have full responsibility** for what value they provide.

Source:TH

Animal Husbandry

Why in News

A variety of policy concerns and the ongoing discussion over **farm laws** have fixed the spotlight on **infrastructure investments necessary** to boost productivity levels and fill critical gaps in production especially in the **Animal Husbandry**.

As the bulk of establishments in this sector is **concentrated in rural India**, the **socio-economic relevance** of this sector cannot be overstated.

Key Points

- **About:**

- Animal husbandry refers to **livestock raising and selective breeding**. It is the management and **care of animals in which the genetic qualities** and behavior of animals are further developed for profit.
- A large number of **farmers depend upon animal husbandry for their livelihood**. It supports the livelihood of **almost 55% of the rural population**.

As per the **Economic Survey-2021**, the **contribution of Livestock** in total agriculture and allied sector **Gross Value Added** (at Constant Prices) has **increased from 24.32% (2014-15) to 28.63% (2018-19)**.

- India is the **highest livestock owner of the world**.

As per the **20th Livestock Census**, the total **Livestock population is 535.78 million in the country** showing an increase of 4.6% over Livestock Census-2012.

- Animal rearing has **multidimensional potential**.

For instance, **Operation Flood**, launched in 1970, **helped dairy farmers direct their own development, increased milk production** ("a flood of milk"), augmented rural incomes and ensured reasonable prices for consumers.

- **Importance:**

- It has **contributed significantly to the empowerment of women** and has increased their income and role in society.
- It is a **major risk mitigation approach for small and marginal farmers**, particularly across the rain-fed regions of India.
- It is at the **centre of poverty alleviation programs** from equity and livelihood standpoints.
- Livestock productivity has been identified as **one of the seven sources of income** growth by the **Inter-Ministerial Committee under the government's target of doubling farmers' income by the year 2022**.

- **Challenges:**

- **Non-availability** of superior **quality breeding bulls**.
Poor quality of semen produced by many of the laboratories.
- Shortage of **fodder resources and ineffective control of animal diseases**.
- **Absence of field oriented conservation** strategy for indigenous breeds.
- **Lack of skills and quality services** to farmers for improving productivity and **improper infrastructure** to support the sector.

- **Government Initiatives to Boost this Sector:**
 - **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):**
 - **About:** This is the first major fund launched by the government that includes a diverse set of stakeholders such as **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO)**, private dairy players, individual entrepreneurs, and non-profits within its ambit.
 - **Launch:** June 2020.
 - **Fund:** It has been set up with an outlay of Rs.15,000 crore.
 - **Aim:** To support private investment in Dairy Processing, value addition and cattle feed infrastructure.
 - **Incentives** will be given for establishing plants for export of **niche products**.
 - A niche product is a product targeting a specific section of a larger industry and market. Niche products are often (but not always) more expensive than more generic products.
 - It will also support the establishment of **animal feed plants of varying capacities** – including setting up of **mineral mixture plants, silage making units, and animal feed testing laboratory**.
 - **National Animal Disease Control Programme:**
 - It has been launched for **Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis** with a total outlay of Rs.13,343 crore to ensure 100% vaccination of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat and pig population.
 - **Rashtriya Gokul Mission:**
 - To develop and conserve indigenous breeds of bovine population.
 - To enhance milk production and to make it more remunerative to the farmers.
 - **National Livestock Mission:**
 - Launched in the year 2014-15.
 - To ensure quantitative and qualitative improvement in livestock production systems and capacity building of all stakeholders.
 - **National Artificial Insemination Programme:**
 - To suggest novel methods of bringing about impregnation in female breeds.
 - To prevent the spread of certain diseases which are genital in nature, thereby enhancing the efficiency of the breed.

Way Forward

- If investments are undertaken in a timely manner, even as the country seeks an exit out of the **pandemic**-induced economic slowdown, pressure will be reduced across the farm sector with immense benefits for the entire economy.
- Macro benefits regarding **climate change** and employment are linked to the Animal Husbandry sector and **enhanced infrastructure** can make processing units more energy-efficient and help mitigate their carbon footprint.

Go Electric Campaign

Why in News

The central government has launched the “**Go Electric**” Campaign to spread awareness on the benefits of **e-mobility** and **EV Charging Infrastructure** as well as **electric cooking** in India.

Key Points

- **About the Campaign:**
 - **Features:**
 - To push the country towards **100% e-mobility and clean and safe e-cooking**.
 - To **create awareness at PAN-India level and reduce the import dependence** of the country.
 - To move ahead on the **path of a low carbon economy**, thereby saving the country and the planet from the adverse impact of climate change.
 - **Implementation:**

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the aegis of the **Ministry of Power** has been mandated to undertake an awareness drive for promoting public charging, e-mobility & its ecosystem.

- **E-mobility:**

- **About:**

- E-mobility **moves away from existing carbon-emitting fossil fuels to using energy from electrical power sources** (e.g. the National Grid) through external charging capability.
 - Currently, **India is using 94 million tonnes of oil and petroleum** products for transportation only which is expected to double by 2030.
 - For fossil fuels, India currently has an **import bill of Rs. 8 lakh Crore.**
 - It encompasses the **use of fully electric, conventional hybrid, plug-in hybrid as well as hydrogen-fuelled vehicles.**
 - The government of India has undertaken multiple initiatives to promote manufacturing and adoption of **electric vehicles (EV)** in India. One such initiative is '**Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-India)**' Scheme.

- **Electric Fuel as an Alternative Fuel:**

- Electric fuel is a major alternative for fossil fuels.
 - When compared to conventional fuels, the electric fuel **has low cost, reduced emissions and it is also indigenous.**
 - Electrification of public transport is not only economical but also eco friendly.
 - The usage of even 10,000 electric vehicles in Delhi can alone save Rs. 30 crore per month.

- **Green Hydrogen:**

- **Green hydrogen** in the commercial vehicle could be a game-changer move which would help in eliminating the crude requirement and imports in all possible ways.

Green hydrogen is **produced using renewable energy and electrolysis** to split water. It is **distinct from:**

- **Grey hydrogen**, which is produced from methane and releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
 - **Blue hydrogen**, which captures those emissions and stores them underground to prevent them causing climate change.
 - Also, for heavy vehicles like buses, the ideal solution is **Green Hydrogen.**
 - The use of green energy generated from agriculture waste and **biomass** will benefit the farmers across the country.
 - The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy can produce the green hydrogen at cheap costs possible in India because of low solar prices.

- **Electric Cooking:**
 - The **shift to induction cooking** will bring the government closer to delivering on its promise to improve energy access.
 - Theoretically, if electric cooktops are adopted, universal electrification could translate into **universal clean cooking** as well.
 - An advantage of the electricity-based solution is that it **can make use of solar power in both urban and rural areas.**

Bureau of Energy Efficiency

- The Government of India set up the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in March 2002 under the provisions of the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001.**
- It assists in developing policies and strategies with the primary objective of reducing energy intensity of the Indian economy.
- **Major Programmes: State Energy Efficiency Index, Perform Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme, The Standards & Labeling Programme, Energy Conservation Building Code.**

Source: PIB

Carbon Watch App: Chandigarh

Why in News

Chandigarh became the first state or Union Territory in India to launch **Carbon Watch**, a mobile application **to assess the carbon footprint of an individual.**

A **carbon footprint** is the **total amount of greenhouse gases**—primarily carbon dioxide—released into the atmosphere by a particular human activity.

Key Points

- **About the App:**
 - The app focuses on individuals' actions and **calculates carbon footprint on the basis of Transport, Energy, Waste and Water consumption.**
 - It will **also provide information such as the national and world average of the emission**, and the individual's level of emission generation.
 - It **encourages people to be Climate-Smart Citizens** while making them capable of accessing their carbon footprint, along with providing them with steps to reduce it.
 - It also **sensitizes people about their lifestyle emissions**, their impact and possible countermeasures to mitigate the same.

- **Carbon Footprint:**
 - According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, a carbon footprint is a measure of the impact people's activities have on the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced through the burning of fossil fuels and is expressed as a weight of CO₂ emissions produced in tonnes.
 - It is **usually measured as tons of CO₂ emitted per year**, a number that can be supplemented by tons of CO₂-equivalent gases, including methane, nitrous oxide, and other greenhouse gases.
 - It can be a broad measure or be applied to the actions of an individual, a family, an event, an organization, or even an entire nation.
- **Carbon Footprint vs Ecological Footprint:**

Carbon footprint is **different from ecological footprint**. While the carbon footprint measures the emission of gases that contribute to global warming, the **ecological footprint** focuses on measuring the use of bio-productive space.
- **Effects of Higher Carbon Footprint:**
 - **Climate change** is the ultimate effect of large carbon footprints. Greenhouse gases, whether natural or human-produced, contribute to the warming of the planet.
 - From 1990 to 2005, carbon dioxide emissions increased by 31%. By 2008, the emissions had contributed to a 35% increase in radiative warming, or a shift in Earth's energy balance toward warming, over 1990 levels.
 - According to **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** records, 2011-2020 was the warmest decade on record, in a persistent long-term climate change trend.
 - **Depletion of Resources:** Large carbon footprints deplete resources on large scales, from a country's deforestation activities to one home's increased use of air conditioning.
- **Methods of Reducing Carbon Footprint:**
 - **Adopting the 4 R's-** Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
 - Driving **more-efficient vehicles** (or making sure that current vehicles are properly maintained), taking public transportation.
 - Individuals and companies can also offset some of their carbon dioxide emissions by **purchasing carbon credits**, the money from which can go into projects such as planting trees or investing in renewable energy.
 - Implementation of the Climate change conventions like the **Paris Agreement** and **Indian initiatives** for the same must be fast forwarded.
 - Indian initiatives include **Nation Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**, **National Wetland Conservation Programme**, etc.

Source: IE

Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** has launched the operational guidelines for integration of **NAFLD (Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease)** with **NPCDCS (National Programme for Prevention & Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke)**.

The **NPCDCS** is being implemented under the **National Health Mission (NHM)**. It was launched in 2010 to prevent and control **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**.

Key Points

- **About NAFLD:**
 - It is the **abnormal accumulation of fat in the liver** in the absence of secondary causes of fatty liver, such as harmful alcohol use, viral hepatitis.
Fatty liver occurs when too much fat builds up in liver cells.
 - It is a **serious health concern as it encompasses a spectrum of liver abnormalities**, from a simple non-alcoholic fatty liver (NAFL, simple fatty liver disease) to more advanced ones like **non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH)**, **cirrhosis** and even liver cancer.
 - **Steatohepatitis** is characterized by **inflammation of the liver** with concurrent fat accumulation in the liver. Mere deposition of fat in the liver is termed steatosis.
 - **Cirrhosis** is a complication of liver disease that involves loss of liver cells and irreversible scarring of the liver.
 - NAFLD acts as an **independent predictor of future risk of cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes** and other metabolic syndromes like hypertension, abdominal obesity, dyslipidaemia, glucose intolerance.
- **Risk From NAFLD:**
 - **High Fatality Rate:**
Over the last two decades, the global burden of NASH has more than doubled. NASH caused 40 lakh prevalent cases of compensated cirrhosis in 1990, which increased to 94 lakh cases in 2017.
 - **Risks Obese and Diabetic Individuals:**
Epidemiological studies suggest that prevalence of NAFLD is around 9% to 32% of the general population in India with a higher prevalence in those with overweight or obesity and those with diabetes or prediabetes.
 - **Incurable:**
Once the disease develops, there is **no specific cure available**, and **health promotion and prevention aspects** targeting weight reduction, healthy lifestyle, etc. can prevent the mortality and morbidity due to NAFLD.

- **Steps Taken by the Government:**

- **Aligning NPCDCS programme strategies** to prevent and control NAFLD by encouraging behavior changes, early diagnosis and capacity building at various levels of healthcare.
- Promoting screening of cancer, diabetes and hypertension under **Ayushman Bharat scheme**.
- Along with the focus of ‘**Eat Right India**’ and ‘**Fit India Movement**’, the entire vision of the government is to move from Diagnostic Cure to Preventive Health.

Source: PIB

Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries

Why in News

The **Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME)** inaugurated 50 artisan-based **SFURTI** clusters, spread over 18 States, to provide a boost to the MSME sector.

The Ministry of MSME is implementing a Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) with a view to organize traditional industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and increase their income.

Key Points

- The Ministry of MSME launched this scheme in the year 2005 with the view to promote Cluster development.
Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is the nodal Agency for promotion of Cluster development for Khadi as well as for Village Industries products.
- SFURTI clusters are of two types i.e., **Regular Cluster** (500 artisans) with Government assistance of up to Rs. 2.5 crore and **Major Cluster** (more than 500 artisans) with Government assistance up to Rs. 5 crore.
- The Ministry **supports various interventions** including setting up of infrastructure through Common Facility Centers (CFCs), procurement of new machineries, creating raw material banks, design intervention, improved packaging, improved skills and capacity development, etc.

- Besides, the scheme focuses on **strengthening the cluster governance systems** with the active participation of the stakeholders, so that they are able to gauge the emerging challenges and opportunities and respond to them.
It is done through building innovative and traditional skills, improved technologies, advanced processes, market intelligence and new models of public-private partnerships, so as to gradually replicate similar models of cluster- based traditional Industries.

Other Recent Initiatives to Promote MSME Sector

- **Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum (UAM):** It is a simple one-page registration form to promote ease of doing business for MSMEs in India.
- **A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE):** The scheme promotes innovation & rural entrepreneurship through rural Livelihood Business Incubator (LBI), Technology Business Incubator (TBI) and Fund of Funds for start up creation in the agro-based industry.
- **Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme:** To facilitate easy flow of credit, guarantee cover is provided for collateral free credit extended to MSMEs.
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):** It is a credit linked subsidy scheme, for setting up of new micro-enterprises and to generate employment opportunities in rural as well as urban areas of the country.
- **Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS) for Technology Upgradation:** CLCSS aims at facilitating technology upgradation of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) by providing 15% capital subsidy for purchase of plant & machinery.

Source: PIB

National Technology Awards 2020

Why in News

A total of 12 companies have been selected for the National Technology Awards 2020 for successful commercialization of innovative indigenous technologies.

Key Points

- The awards are conferred by the **Technology Development Board (TDB).**

- Every year TDB seeks applications for prestigious National awards for commercialization of technologies under three categories - **Indigenous technologies, MSME, and Startups.**
 - **Category 1: National Award For Successful Commercialization of Indigenous Technology:**
 - This award is given to an industrial concern which has successfully developed & commercialized an indigenous technology.
 - In case, the technology developer / provider and the company commercializing the technology are two different organizations, each is eligible for award of Rs. 25 Lakh and a trophy.
 - **Category 2: National Award For MSMEs:**

The award of Rs. 15 lakhs each in this category is given to selected MSMEs that have successfully commercialized the product based on indigenous technology.
 - **Category 3: National Award For Technology Start-ups:**
 - This award is given to a technology start-up for promising new technology with potential for commercialization.
 - The award in addition to the trophy includes a cash award of Rs. 15 Lakh.
- These awards conferred to various industries provide a platform of recognition to Indian industries and their technology provider, who have worked as a team, to bring innovation to the market and contributed to the vision of **“Atmanirbhar Bharat”**.

Technology Development Board

- The Technology Development Board is a **statutory body** of the Government of India functioning under the **Department of Science of Technology**. It was established in 1996.
- It provides financial assistance to companies working for commercialization of indigenous technologies and adaptation of imported technologies for domestic applications.
- The **National Technology Day (11th May)** is organised every year by the TDB.

Source:PIB
