



## Agreement on Agriculture: WTO

### Why in News

Recently, while addressing the **G-33** Virtual Informal Ministerial Meeting, India's Commerce and Industry Minister pointed out the imbalances in the [Agreement on Agriculture](#) at the [World Trade Organization \(WTO\)](#).

- He claimed that it was in **favour of developed countries** and historical asymmetries and imbalances must be corrected to ensure a **rule-based, fair and equitable order**.
- He urged that G33 must strive for positive outcomes on a permanent solution to **Public Stockholding (PSH)** for food security purposes, finalization of a **Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM)** quickly and a balanced outcome on Domestic Support.

### G-33

- It is a **forum of developing countries formed during the Cancun ministerial conference of the WTO**, to protect the interest of the developing countries in agricultural trade negotiations.
  - **India is a part of the G33**, which is a **group of 47 developing and least developed countries**.
- It was created in order **to help group countries** which were all **facing similar problems**. The G33 has **proposed special rules for developing countries** at WTO negotiations, like allowing them to continue to restrict access to their agricultural markets.

### Key Points

- **About:**
  - It is aimed **to remove trade barriers and to promote transparent market access and integration of global markets**.
  - The **WTO's Agriculture Committee** oversees implementation of the Agreement and provides a forum for members to address related concerns.
- **Three pillars of Agreement on Agriculture:**
  - **Domestic Support:** It calls for **reduction in domestic subsidies** that distorts free trade and fair price.
    - Under this provision, the **Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) is to be reduced by 20%** over a period of 6 years by developed countries and 13% over a period of 10 years by developing countries.
    - Under this, Subsidies are categorized into:

Green Box	Amber Box	Blue Box
▪ Subsidies that <b>do not distort trade</b> , or at most	▪ All domestic support measures considered to	▪ This is the <b>"amber box with conditions"</b> . Such

<p>cause minimal distortion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They are <b>government-funded</b> and must not involve price support.</li> <li>▪ They also include <b>environmental protection and regional development programmes.</b></li> <li>▪ “Green box” subsidies are therefore <b>allowed without limits</b>, provided they comply with the policy-specific criteria.</li> </ul>	<p><b>distort production and trade (with some exceptions) fall into the amber box</b> as all domestic supports except those in the blue and green boxes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ These include <b>measures to support prices, or subsidies directly related to production quantities.</b></li> </ul>	<p>conditions are designed to reduce distortion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Any support that would normally be in the amber box is placed in the blue box if the support also requires farmers to limit production.</li> <li>▪ At present, <b>there are no limits on spending on blue box subsidies.</b></li> </ul>
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- **Market Access:** Market access for goods in the WTO means the **conditions, tariff and non-tariff measures, agreed by members** for the entry of specific goods into their markets.
  - Market access requires that **tariffs fixed (like custom duties) by individual countries be cut progressively to allow free trade.** It also required countries to remove non-tariff barriers and convert them to Tariff duties.
- **Export Subsidy:** Subsidy **on inputs of agriculture**, making export cheaper or other incentives for exports such as import duty remission etc are included under export subsidies.
  - These can **result in dumping of highly subsidized** (and cheap) products in other countries and damage the domestic agriculture sector of other countries.

## World Trade Organization

- It came into being in 1995. The WTO is the successor to the [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade](#) (GATT) established in the wake of the **Second World War**.
  - Its objective is to help **trade flow smoothly, freely and predictably.**
  - It has **164 members**, accounting for **98% of world trade.**
- It was developed through a series of trade negotiations, or rounds, held under the GATT.
  - **GATT** is a set of multilateral trade agreements aimed at the **abolition of quotas and the reduction of tariff duties** among the contracting nations.
- The WTO’s rules – the agreements – are the **result of negotiations between the members.**
  - The current set is largely the outcome of the **1986- 94 Uruguay Round negotiations**, which included a major revision of the original GATT.
- The WTO **Secretariat** is based in **Geneva** (Switzerland).
- **Other Mechanisms of WTO**
  - [Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights \(TRIPS\)](#)
  - [Trade Facilitation Agreement](#)
  - **General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)**
  - [Trade Policy Review Mechanism](#)

[Source: IE](#)

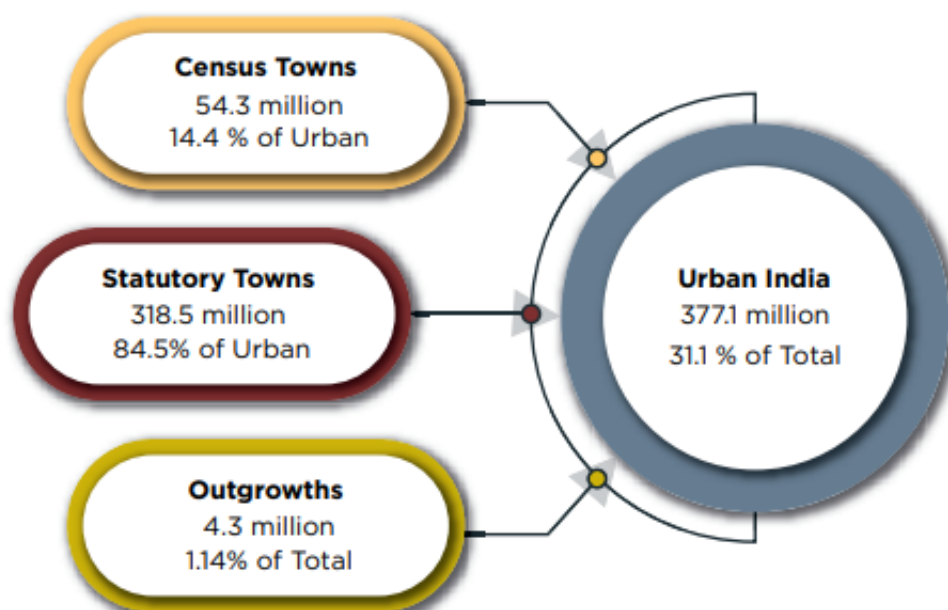
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# Urban Planning Reforms: NITI Aayog

## Why in News

Recently, [NITI Aayog](#) has launched the report titled '**Reforms in Urban Planning Capacity in India**'.

*Composition of Urban Population*



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## Key Points

### ▪ Urbanisation in India:

#### ◦ Urbanisation Level (National):

- India's population stood at 1210 million in 2011, with an urbanisation level of **31.1%** ([Census of India 2011](#)).
- Urbanisation is **an increase in the number of people living in towns and cities**.
- The **distribution of urban centres and the pace of urbanisation is not uniform** across the country.
- **Over 75% of the urban population of the country is in 10 States:** Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Kerala.

#### ◦ State-wise Scenario:

- **Above National Average:** Goa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Gujarat have attained over 40% urbanisation.
- **Below National Average:** Bihar, Odisha, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh continue to be at a lower level of urbanisation than the national average of 31.1%.
- **Union Territories:** NCT of Delhi, Daman and Diu, Chandigarh, and Lakshadweep, show above 75% urbanisation.

### ▪ Need for Reforming Urban Planning Capacity:

- **Increasing Urbanisation:** India's urban population is 11% of that of the world.
- However, **in absolute numbers, the urban population in India is more than**

**highly urbanised countries/regions** like the United States, Japan, Western Europe, and South America.

- During 2011-36, urban growth will be responsible for 73% of the rise in total population in India.
- **Urbanisation is Central to India's Economy:** Urbanisation contributes nearly 60% to India's [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#).
  - However, there exists large, untapped economies of scale.
- **India's National Growth Targets:**
  - **Economic Growth Target:** USD [5 trillion economy](#) by 2024.
  - **Employment Target:** Total workforce estimated to be 0.64 billion by 2030, of which 0.26 billion to be [employed](#) in urban areas.
  - **Infrastructure Targets:** Creation of 11 large industrial corridors as part of the [National Industrial Corridor Programme](#), several multi-modal logistic parks, etc.
  - **Environmental Protection Targets:** [River rejuvenation](#), [clean air in cities](#), etc.
- **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP):** The urban sector has a significant share of 17% in the [NIP](#).
  - NIP facilitates infrastructure projects in the country with a projected investment of Rs 111 lakh crore during the period 2020-25.
- **India's Global Commitments:**
  - [SDGs \(Goal 11\)](#): Promote urban planning as one of the recommended methods for achieving sustainable development.
  - [UN-Habitat's New Urban Agenda](#): It was adopted at Habitat III in 2016. It puts forth principles for the planning, construction, development, management, and improvement of urban areas.
  - [UN-Habitat \(2020\)](#) mentions **spatial sustainability**, as a concept. It suggests that the spatial conditions of a city can enhance its power to generate social, economic and environmental value and well-being.
  - [Paris Agreement](#): India's [National Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#) includes the goals to reduce the emission intensity of the country's GDP by 33 to 35% by 2030 from 2005 level.
- **Recommendations:**
  - **Planning of Healthy Cities: Central Sector Scheme '500 Healthy Cities Programme'**, for a period of 5 years, wherein priority cities and towns would be selected jointly by the states and local bodies.
    - The Programme can lead to **optimum utilization of urban land** as well.
  - **Re-engineering of Urban Governance:** To bring in more institutional clarity and also multi-disciplinary expertise to solve urban challenges.
    - The **formation of an apex committee at the state level is recommended** to undertake a regular review of planning legislations (including town and country planning or urban and regional development acts or other relevant acts).
  - **Strengthening the Role of the Private Sector:** These include the adoption of fair processes for procuring technical consultancy services, strengthening project structuring and management skills in the public sector, and empanelment of private sector consultancies.
  - **Measures for Strengthening Human Resource and Match Demand-Supply:** The constitution of a 'National Council of Town and Country Planners' as a statutory body of the Government of India.
    - Also, a '**National Digital Platform of Town and Country Planners**' is suggested to be created within the National Urban Innovation Stack of MoHUA.
  - **Citizen Outreach Campaign'** for demystifying urban planning.

- Strengthening **Urban Planning Education System**.

## Schemes/Programmes Related to Urban Development

- **Smart Cities**: To promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of Smart Solutions.
- **AMRUT Mission**: To ensure that every household has access to a tap with the assured supply of water and a sewerage connection.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban**: Aims at making urban India free from open defecation and achieving 100% scientific management of municipal solid waste in 4,041 statutory towns in the country.
- **HRIDAY**: The National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), aims to bring together urban planning, economic growth and heritage conservation in an inclusive manner & with the objective of preserving the heritage character of the City.
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban**: Addresses Urban housing shortage among the Urban Poor including the Slum Dwellers by ensuring a pucca house to eligible urban poor.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Gupta Period Temple Remains Found: UP

### Why in News

Recently, the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) discovered remains of an ancient temple dating back to the **Gupta period (5<sup>th</sup> century)** in **Bilsarh village** in Uttar Pradesh's **Etah district**.

- The Bilsarh site was **declared 'protected' in 1928 by the ASI**.

### Key Points

- **About:**
  - Two pillars were excavated on which there is an inscription about **Kumaragupta I**, the powerful ruler of Gupta dynasty, in **'sankh lipi'** (conch script or shell script) typical of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.
    - The **Guptas were the first to build structural temples**, distinctly different from the ancient rock-cut temples.
  - The inscription was **deciphered as Mahendraditya** which was the **title of king Kumargupta I** who had even conducted **ashwamedh yagya** during his rule.
    - The **statue of a horse having similar inscription** is at the state museum in **Lucknow**.
    - **Ashvamedha Yagya** is a horse sacrifice ritual followed by the Srauta tradition of Vedic religion.
  - The discovery becomes significant since only two other structural temples from the Gupta age have been found so far — **Dashavatara Temple (Deogarh)** and **Bhitargaon Temple (Kanpur Dehat)**.



### ▪ Shankhalipi Script:

- Also called “**shell-script**” is found in inscriptions across north-central India and dates to between the **4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries**.
  - Both **Shankhalipi and Brahmi are stylised scripts** used primarily for names and signatures.
  - The inscriptions consist of a **small number of characters**, suggesting that the shell inscriptions are **names or auspicious symbols** or a combination of the two.
- It was **discovered in 1836** on a brass trident in Uttarakhand’s Barahat by English scholar **James Prinsep**.
- **Prominent sites with shell inscriptions:** Mundeshwari Temple (Bihar), the [Udayagiri Caves](#) (Madhya Pradesh), Mansar (Maharashtra) and some of the cave sites of Gujarat and Maharashtra.
  - These **inscriptions are also reported in Indonesia’s Java and Borneo**.

### ▪ Kumaragupta-I:

- He was the **Successor of Chandragupta-II** and had a long reign from **414 to 455 A.D.**
- He performed the Asvamedha Yajna which was confirmed by **Asvamedha coins**. The discovery of **his 1395 coins confirms his extension towards the South**.
- His period is also regarded as **forming part of the Golden Age of the Guptas**.
- Towards the middle of the fifth century A.D. The reign of the Kumaragupta-I was **disturbed by the revolt of Pushyamitra tribe** and the invasion of the **Hunas**.
  - His greatest achievement was his **repulsing the attack of the Pushyamitra**.
- After the death of Kumaragupta-I **Skandagupta succeeded in 455 A.D.** and reigned from **455 to 467 A.D.**

## Gupta Empire

### ▪ About:

- The Gupta Empire stretched across **northern, central and parts of southern India** between **320 and 550 CE**.
- The period is noted for its achievements in the **arts, architecture, sciences, religion, and philosophy**.
- **Chandragupta I (320 - 335 CE) started a rapid expansion** of the Gupta Empire and soon established himself as the first sovereign ruler of the empire.
- It marked the **end of 500 hundred years of domination of the provincial powers** and resulting disquiet that began with the **fall of the Mauryas**.
- It began a period of overall prosperity and growth that continued for the next two and half centuries which came to be **known as a Golden Age in India's history**.

### ▪ Governance:

- The efficiency of their **martial system was well known**. The large kingdom was divided

into smaller **pradesha** (provinces).

▪ **Trade:**

- **Gold and silver coins** were issued in great numbers which is a general indicator of the health of the economy.
- Trade and commerce flourished both within the country and outside. **Silk, cotton, spices, medicine, priceless gemstones, pearl, precious metal and steel** were exported by sea.

▪ **Religion:**

- They were devout **Vaishnava (Hindus who worship the Supreme Creator as Vishnu)** themselves, yet that did not prevent them from being **tolerant towards the believers of Buddhism and Jainism**.

▪ **Literature:**

- Poet and playwright **Kalidasa created** such epics as *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, *Malavikagnimitram*, *Raghuvansha* and *Kumarsambhaba*. **Harishena** composed *Allahabad Prasasti*, **Sudraka** wrote *Mricchakatika*, **Vishakhadatta** created *Mudrarakshasa* and **Vishnusharma** penned *Panchatantra*.
- **Varahamihira** wrote *Brihatsamhita* and also contributed to the fields of astronomy and astrology. Genius mathematician and astronomer **Aryabhata** wrote *Surya Siddhanta* which covered several aspects of geometry, trigonometry and cosmology. **Shanku** devoted himself to creating texts about Geography.

▪ **Architecture:**

- The finest examples of painting, sculpture and architecture of the period can be found in **Ajanta, Ellora, Sarnath, Mathura, Anuradhapura and Sigiriya**.

[Source: IE](#)

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## 21st SCO Summit

### Why in News

The 21<sup>st</sup> Summit of the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#) Council of Heads of State was held recently via video Conferencing in **Dushanbe, Tajikistan**.

- At the meet the focus was primarily on the **ground situation in Afghanistan and its global repercussions**.
- **Iran** has been accepted as the **ninth full member of the organisation**.

### Key Points

▪ **India's Stand:**

- It took a **strong stance against radicalisation and extremism**, urging the panel to come up with a **joint approach** and frame a **code of conduct** to stop terror financing and cross-border terrorism.
  - It also stressed upon the **importance of moderate Islam in Central Asia**.
- Flagged **concerns over the serious humanitarian crisis** unfolding in Afghanistan, noting that the economic woes of the Afghan people are increasing due to the **blockage in financial and trade flows**.



- Pointed out that the developments in the country could lead to an **uncontrolled flow of drugs, illegal weapons and human trafficking**.
- It is **committed to increasing its connectivity with [Central Asia](#)**. Asserting that **there should be respect for the territorial integrity** of all countries.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:**
  - **About:**
    - It is a **permanent intergovernmental international organisation**. It was **created in 2001**.
    - The **SCO Charter was signed in 2002**, and **entered into force in 2003**.
    - It's a **Eurasian political, economic and military organisation** aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
    - It is seen as a counterweight to **[North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#)**, It is a **eight-member economic and security bloc** and has emerged as one of the **largest transregional international organisations**.
  - **Official Languages:**
    - Russian and Chinese.
  - **Permanent Bodies:**
    - SCO Secretariat in Beijing
    - Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent.
  - **Chairmanship:**
    - It is by rotation for a year by Member States.
  - **Genesis:**
    - Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five**.
    - Shanghai Five (1996) emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China to ensure stability along the borders.
    - Following the accession of Uzbekistan to the organisation in **2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO**.
    - **India and Pakistan became members in 2017. Iran is the ninth and the newest member of SCO**.
    - **India was made an observer at the SCO in 2005** and has generally participated in the ministerial-level meetings of the grouping which focus mainly on security and economic cooperation in the Eurasian region.

[Source: IE](#)

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## Global Methane Pledge

### Why in News

Recently, the US President has announced the **Global Methane Pledge**, which is an **US-EU led effort to cut methane emissions by a third by the end of this decade**.

- The announcement has come ahead of 26<sup>th</sup> **[Conference of the Parties \(COP26\)](#)** of **[United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#)** in Glasgow, UK.
- This will also help in abiding by the targets of the **[Paris climate deal](#)**.



## Key Points

### ▪ About:

- The pact between the US and the EU **sets a target of cutting at least 30% from global methane emissions**, based on 2020 levels, by 2030.
- If adopted around the world, this **would reduce global heating by 0.2C** by the 2040s, compared with likely temperature rises by then.
- The world is now about 1.2C hotter now than in pre-industrial times.

### ▪ Methane Gas:

#### ◦ About:

- Methane is the **simplest hydrocarbon, consisting of one carbon atom and four hydrogen atoms** (CH<sub>4</sub>).
- It is flammable, and is used as a fuel worldwide.
- Methane is a powerful **greenhouse gas**.
- Approximately 40% of **methane emitted is from natural sources** and about 60% **comes from human-influenced sources**, including livestock farming, rice agriculture, biomass burning and so forth.

#### ◦ Impact:

- **More Global Warming Potential:** It is nearly 80-85 times more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of its global warming capacity.
- This makes it a critical target for reducing global warming more quickly while simultaneously working to reduce other greenhouse gases.
- **Promotes Generation of Tropospheric Ozone:** Increasing emissions are driving a rise in **tropospheric ozone** air pollution, which causes more than one million premature deaths annually.

### ▪ Related Indian Initiatives:

- **'Harit Dhara' (HD):** Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed an anti-methanogenic feed supplement **'Harit Dhara' (HD)**, which can cut down cattle methane emissions by 17-20% and can also result in higher milk production.
- **India Greenhouse Gas Program:** The India GHG Program led by WRI India (non-profit organization), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)** is an industry-led voluntary framework to measure and manage greenhouse gas emissions.
- The programme builds comprehensive measurement and management strategies to reduce emissions and drive more profitable, competitive and sustainable businesses and organisations in India.
- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** **NAPCC** was launched in 2008 which aims at creating awareness among the representatives of the public, different agencies of the government, scientists, industry and the communities on the threat posed by climate change and the steps to counter it.
- **Bharat Stage-VI Norms:** India shifted from **Bharat Stage-IV (BS-IV) to Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI)** emission norms.

## Global Methane Initiative (GMI)

- It is an international public-private partnership focused on reducing barriers to the recovery and use of methane as a clean energy source.
- GMI provides technical support to deploy methane-to-energy projects around the world that enable Partner Countries to launch methane recovery and use projects.
- **India is a partner country.**

## World Bank Stops 'Ease of Doing Business' Report

### Why in News

The [World Bank](#) would discontinue the practice of issuing 'Doing Business report' following an investigation reported "data irregularities" in its 2018 and 2020 editions (released in 2017 and 2019, respectively) and possible "ethical matters" involving bank staff.

- It will be working on a new approach to assessing the business and investment climate.

### Key Points

#### ▪ Ease of Doing Business Report:

- The report was **introduced in 2003 to provide an assessment of objective measures of business regulations** and their enforcement **across 190 economies** on ten parameters affecting a business through its life cycle.
- **10 different parameters namely**, Starting a Business, Dealing with Construction permits, Electricity availability, Property registration, Credit availability, Protecting minority Investors, Paying Taxes, Trading across borders, Contracts enforcement, and Resolving Insolvency.
- It ranks countries on the basis of **Distance to Frontier (DTF) score** that highlights the gap of an economy with respect to the global best practice.
  - For example, a score of **75 means an economy was 25 percentage points away** from the frontier constructed from the best performances across all economies and across time.

#### ▪ India's Performance:

- Notably, in three reports, released in 2017, 2018 and 2019, India ranked among the top 10 economies showing "the most notable improvement".
  - Of the 79 positions in the Bank's Doing Business rankings that India gained between 2014 and 2019, 67 rank improvements happened 2017 onwards, with the biggest 30-rank jump happening in the Doing Business 2018 report, released in October 2017.
- The [latest report](#), published in October 2019, **placed India at 63<sup>rd</sup>** in Doing Business, compared with 77<sup>th</sup> in 2018 and 100 in 2017.
  - India, along with other top improvers, had implemented 59 regulatory reforms in 2018-19, accounting for a fifth of all reforms recorded worldwide.
  - During 2018-19, India had implemented reforms across parameters such as 'starting a business', 'dealing with construction permits', 'trading across borders', and 'resolving insolvency'. The government's goal was to be among the top 50 economies by 2020.
- The **scores for India used to be based on coverage of just two cities**, with Mumbai carrying a weight of 47% and Delhi a weight of 53%.

## World Bank

### ▪ About:

- It was created in 1944, as the **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)** along with the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#). The IBRD later became the World Bank.
- The World Bank Group is a unique global partnership of five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.

### ▪ Members:

- It has 189 member countries.
- **India is also a member** country.

### ▪ Major reports:

- **Ease of Doing Business.**
- [Human Capital Index.](#)
- [World Development Report.](#)

### ▪ Its Five development institutions:

- **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD):** provides loans, credits, and grants.
- **International Development Association (IDA):** provides low- or no-interest loans to low-income countries.
- **International Finance Corporation (IFC):** provides investment, advice, and asset management to companies and governments.
- **Multilateral Guarantee Agency (MIGA):** insures lenders and investors against political risk such as war.
- **International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID):** settles investment-disputes between investors and countries.

- **India is not a member** of this.

[Source: TH](#)

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## SPIN Scheme: KVIC

### Why in News

Recently, the **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** launched the **SPIN (Strengthening the Potential of India) scheme** to make potters self-sustainable.

### KVIC

- A **statutory body** established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956. It functions under the [Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises](#). In 2017-18, it launched the [Honey Mission programme](#). Recently, it launched a project named [Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought \(BOLD\)](#) from the village NichlaMandwa in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

## Key Points

### ▪ SPIN Scheme:

#### ◦ About:

- Under SPIN, KVIC will **facilitate potters to get easy loans** from banks that will help the potters to diversify their activities and enhance their income.

#### ◦ Objective:

- It is aimed at **sustainable development by creating local self-employment** which is aligned with the Prime Minister's commitment of **"Job to Every Hand"** (Har Hath Me Kaam).

#### ◦ Features:

- It is a no-subsidy program.
- KVIC facilitates potters to get bank loans under [Pradhan Mantri Shishu Mudra Yojana](#).
- No financial burden on the exchequer.
- Beneficiaries can repay the loans in easy installments.

#### ◦ Significance:

- It will reduce their dependence on government subsidy and thus make potters self-reliant.

### ▪ Other Related Schemes:

- [Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana](#).
- [Terracotta Grinder](#).
- [Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme](#).

## Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

- It was launched by the government **in 2015 for providing loans up to Rs. 10 lakh** to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro-enterprises. Loans under this scheme are **collateral-free loans**.
- Under this, three products have been created, i.e. **'Shishu', 'Kishore' and 'Tarun'** as per the stage of growth and funding needs of the beneficiary micro unit.
  - **Shishu:** Covering loans up to Rs. 50,000.
  - **Kishore:** Covering loans above Rs. 50,000 and up to Rs. 5 lakh.
  - **Tarun:** Covering loans above Rs. 5 lakh and up to Rs. 10 lakh.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Toxic 3 Os Used in Sunscreen

### Why in News

Recently, a petition has been submitted by some activists to the **US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** to reclassify **toxic 3 Os (Oxybenzone, Octinoxate and Octocrylene)** used in sunscreen.

- They demanded that chemicals be shifted to “**Not Generally Recognized As Safe & Effective**” (**GRASE Category II**).

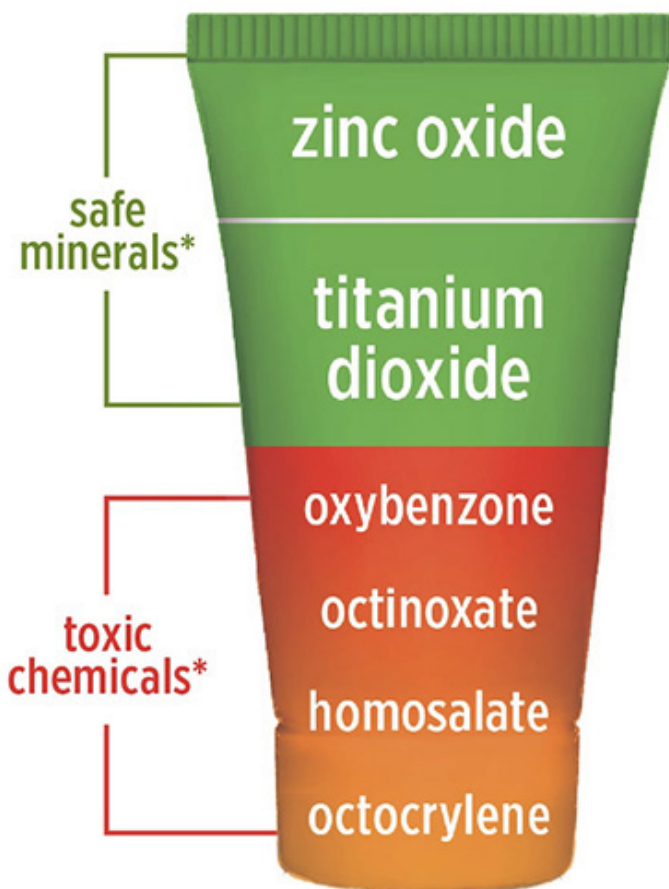
## Key Points

- **Toxic 3 Os:**

- Oxybenzone (OBZ), avobenzene (AVB), octocrylene (OCR) and octinoxate (OMC) are **UltraViolet (UV) filters** commonly added to chemical sunscreens.
- These UV filters are known to widely contaminate the environment through a variety of **anthropogenic sources**, including sewage discharge.

- **Related Concerns:**

- **The 3Os** are active ingredients present in more than **two-thirds of all sunscreens** and they pose a **threat to public health, marine life and coral reefs**.
- **Octocrylene** in sun protection products **degrades into benzophenone**.
  - Benzophenone is a carcinogen that can also interfere with key hormones and reproductive organs.
- They cause **human cell damage** that has been linked to cancer, disrupt hormones, have been found in breast milk, blood and urine and are **known allergens**.
- Oxybenzone is **particularly toxic to corals** at concentrations as low as a few parts per trillion.
  - They wash off people’s bodies when they swim and contaminate through waste water runoff and cause ‘**zombie**’ coral which looks healthy but is unable to reproduce, **coral bleaching** as well as other issues.



## say **YES** to minerals

Natural minerals reflect UV to protect from burning and aging rays. They rub in sheer and are immediately effective. Because minerals aren't absorbed, they are safe and gentle on sensitive skin, and just as gentle on the planet!

## say **NO** to chemicals

Chemical sunscreens disperse UV rays through the body and need 20 minutes to become effective. They're absorbed into the skin and the bloodstream, where they've been linked to health issues from allergies to infertility. They've even been tied to the destruction of the coral reefs.

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# Earthshot Prize 2021

## Why in News

Recently, **two Indians (Vinisha and Vidyut)** among 15 finalists were selected for the first ever **Earthshot Prize 2021**, which will be held in London.

- A 14-year-old Tamil Nadu schoolgirl's solar-powered ironing cart and a Delhi entrepreneur's agricultural waste recycling concept named among finalists.

## Key Points

### ▪ About:

- The prize was **launched by Britain's Prince William in October 2020** in order to search for inspiring and innovative solutions to problems facing the planet.
- The prize is inspired by US President John F Kennedy's "**Moonshot**" programme, which resulted in the **US Apollo lunar launches** and the first man setting foot on the Moon in 1969.

### ▪ Theme:

- It is centred around five "**Earthshots**", simple but ambitious goals for the planet, which if **achieved by 2030 will improve life for all**, for generations to come.

### ▪ Five Earthshots:

- Protect and restore nature
- Clean our air
- Revive our oceans
- Build a waste-free world
- Fix our climate.

### ▪ Awards Ceremony:

- It will take place in different cities across the world **each year between 2021 and 2030**, at which the **five winners for each of the Earthshots will be selected from 15 finalists**.

### ▪ Benefits to Winners:

- After the awards, **each winner will receive a global platform and prestigious profile**, with their stories being showcased over the decade with the ambition that their solutions lead to mass adoption, replication and scaling.
  - The **1 million pound in prize money** will support environmental and conservation projects that are agreed with a winner.

### ▪ Eligibility:

- Prizes can be **awarded to a wide range of individuals, teams or collaborations** such as scientists, activists, economists, community projects etc, which make a substantial contribution to achieving the Earthshots.

### ▪ Prize Management:

- In addition to the **Prize Council**, the Earthshot Prize is supported by its Global Alliance, a network of organisations worldwide which share the ambition of the Prize to repair the planet.

## Free Education to 112 Aspirational Districts

### Why in News

Recently, the [NITI Aayog](#) launched an initiative with BYJU'S (an edutech giant) to provide **free access to tech-driven learning programmes to children from India's 112 aspirational districts.**

### Key Points

- **Students of Classes 6-12** in government schools across **112 'Aspirational Districts (AD)'** will get free access to the company's **"premium learning resources"**.
  - ADs are the districts which are affected by poor socio-economic indicators. They are aspirational in the context, that **improvement in these districts can lead to the overall improvement in human development** in India.
- BYJU'S will also provide **"free" coaching classes to over 3,000 "meritorious" students of Classes 11 and 12**, offered by Aakash Institute, for engineering and medical entrance examinations.
- It aims **to make the supplemental learning resources available to children** in the government schools in the Aspirational Districts on a pro-bono basis (without charge or very less fees).
- It is also aimed **to improve the online education system** in India and mitigate the digital divide in education.