



Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana

Recently the central government has **started the registration of beneficiaries** under the pension scheme for farmers i.e. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana (PM-KMY).

Salient Features

- The scheme has been started to provide **social security** to all landholding Small and Marginal Farmers (farmers whose land holdings are less than two hectares of land in the country).
- Under this scheme, **a fixed pension of Rs.3,000/-** will be provided to all eligible small and marginal farmers.
- It is a **voluntary** and contribution based pension scheme.
- Pension will be paid to the farmers from a Pension Fund managed by the **Life Insurance Corporation of India**.
- Farmers will have to contribute an amount between **Rs.55 to Rs.200 per month** in the Pension Fund till they reach the retirement date i.e. the age of 60 years.
- The Central Government will also make an **equal contribution** of the same amount in the pension fund.
- Those farmers who are of the age of **18 years and above and upto 40 years** are eligible to join the scheme.
- **Spouses** of the Small and Marginal farmers are also eligible to join the scheme separately and they will also get separate pension of Rs.3000 when they reach the age of 60 years.
- The eligible farmers can enroll in the scheme at the nearest **Common Service Centre (CSC)**.
- It can be noted that, to augment the income of the Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs), the government has recently launched the new Central Sector Scheme, namely, **“Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)”**.

[Source: BS](#)

India-China

[India and China](#) have signed **four agreements** to strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties.

- The 4 agreements are on:
 - **Cultural Exchanges:** To promote **cultural exchanges** for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, organisation of cultural activities and management of archaeological heritage sites.
 - **Healthcare:** To enhance cooperation in the field of **traditional medicine**, where both India and China have a rich knowledge, accumulated over centuries.
 - **Sports:** To promote exchanges between **national sports associations, sports persons and youth** for strengthening cooperation on international sports events.
 - **Cooperation in Museum Management:** To promote **collaboration between Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan and the National Museum, New Delhi** in exhibitions,

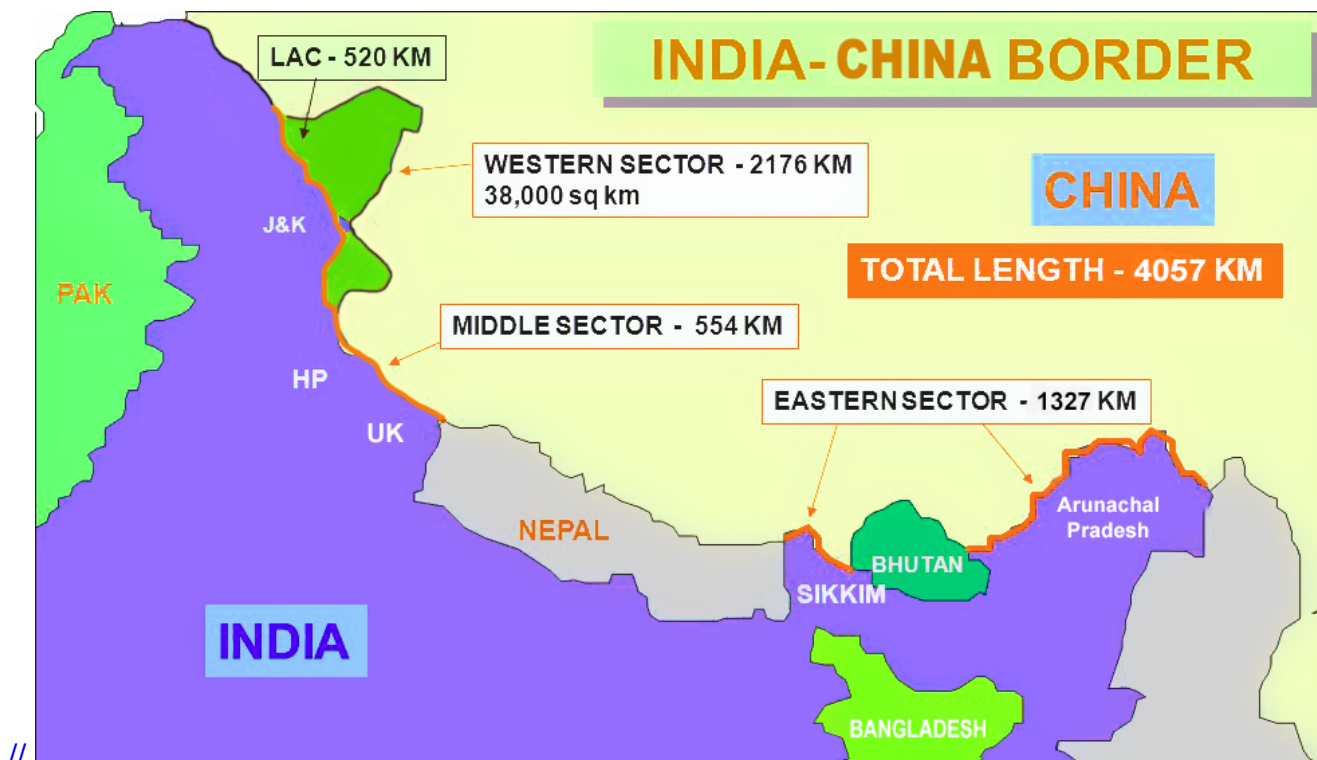
protection and restoration of collections and archaeological excavations.

- The **Hubei Provincial Museum** is one of the best known museums in China, with a large amount of state-level historic and cultural relics.
- The **National Museum** is one of the largest museums in India. Established in 1949, it holds a variety of articles ranging from pre-historic era to modern works of art.

China's Initiatives at Kailash Mansarovar

- To improve the material comforts of the pilgrims to [Kailash Mansarovar](#), the Chinese government has built accommodation facilities, called **reception centres**, at various points of the pilgrimage.
 - The reception centres, each with about 150 beds, have rooms with charging points, a common kitchen and a common washroom, and provide food for the pilgrims.
 - The Chinese government has spent **\$5.21 million** in building these centres.

Ladakh and Line of Actual Control



- The External Affairs Minister has assured China that India's decision to [exercise greater administrative control over Ladakh](#) would have no implications for India's external boundaries or the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.
- **LAC is a 4,057-km porous border** running through glaciers, snow deserts, mountains and rivers that separate India and China.
- The LAC traverses three areas— **Western (Ladakh, Kashmir), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal)**.
- In 1993, India and China signed an accord to reduce tensions along their border and respect the LAC. Three years later in 1996, the two countries agreed to delimit the LAC and institute confidence building measures.
- In October 2013, the two sides signed the Boundary Defence Cooperation Agreement to prevent any flare up along the un-demarcated border. This encompasses both military and diplomat level dialogue mechanism.

[Source: BS](#)

Extension of Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary

Recently, the Forest Department identified around 300 hectares of revenue **land for inclusion** in the **Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary** (KWS),

- The land is being diverted as compensation, for setting up a [new Missile Test Launch Facility](#) by the [Defence Research and Development Organisation \(DRDO\)](#)
- The move has also been recommended by the [National Board for Wildlife](#).

Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary

- Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Andhra Pradesh, India.
- The sanctuary is a part of the mangrove wetland in Andhra Pradesh and is located in the coastal plain of Krishna delta, spread across **Krishna and Guntur districts** of Andhra Pradesh.
- The **estuary of the Krishna River** passes through the sanctuary.
- It is believed that this region potentially holds one of the **most significant populations of fishing cats** in the world.

Fishing Cats

- The fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) is a medium-sized wild cat of South and Southeast Asia.
The destruction of wetlands and have declined severely over the last decade.
- The fishing cat is listed as **Endangered** on the [IUCN Red List](#).
- The [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species \(CITES\)](#) lists the fishing cat on **Appendix II part of Article IV of CITES**.
- In India, the fishing cat is included in Schedule I of the [Indian Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#) and thereby protected from hunting.
- Fishing cat populations are threatened by the des

Protected Areas

- Broadly, there are **three types** of protected areas: **Wildlife Sanctuary, National Park, and Biosphere reserve**.
 - **Wildlife sanctuaries** refer to an area which provides protection and favourable living conditions to the wild animals.
 - **National Park** implies an area that is exclusively designated by the government for the conservation of wildlife and biodiversity due to its **natural, cultural and historical** significance

National Parks & Wildlife Sanctuaries

- National parks are **highly restricted** areas, which are not open to all the people, whereas wildlife sanctuaries have **lesser restrictions** than national parks.
 - For example: To visit national parks, official permission is to be taken from the requisite authorities. In contrast, no official permission is to be taken to visit a wildlife sanctuary.
 - Human activities are allowed to a limited extent in the wildlife sanctuaries, but in the case of national parks, they are strictly prohibited.

- Boundaries of wildlife sanctuaries are not sacrosanct. However, the national parks have clearly marked boundaries **(fixed by legislation)**.
- The International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has declared **National Parks** in **Category II** of the protected areas. whereas **wildlife sanctuaries** are grouped in **Category IV** of protected areas.
- However, most of the national parks were initially wildlife sanctuaries, which were then upgraded to national parks. Also, **tourism is allowed** in both of them.

Biosphere Reserves

- **Biosphere reserves** are protected areas, which tend to conserve the **genetic diversity** of the plants, animals, birds, etc.
 - It comprising terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems.
 - Each reserve promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.
 - Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located. Their status is internationally recognized.
 - There are 701 biosphere reserves in 124 countries.
- **A biosphere reserve is divided into three zones: Core zone, Buffer zone, Transition zone.**
 - This categorization gained international prominence through UNESCO's **Man and the Biosphere Programme** in 1971.
 - The **core area(s)** comprises a strictly protected ecosystem that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.
 - The **buffer zone** surrounds or adjoins the core areas, and is used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.
 - The **transition area** is the part of the reserve where the greatest activity is allowed, fostering economic and human development that is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable.

[Source:TH](#)

Western Zonal Council

The 24th meeting of the Western Zonal Council, to be **chaired by Union Home Minister, will be held in Panjim (Goa) on August 22, 2019.**

- Speedy investigations into sexual assault cases, a comprehensive security plan and improved security at railway stations will top the agenda of the meeting.
- The council, functioning under the aegis of the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)'s Inter-State Council Secretariat**, comprises **Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and the Union Territories of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.**
- The previous meeting of the council was chaired by the then Home Minister in April, 2018 at Gandhinagar (Gujrat).

Zonal Council

- The [Zonal Councils](#) are **the statutory (and not the constitutional) bodies.** They are

established by an Act of the Parliament, that is, **States Reorganisation Act of 1956**.

- The act divided the country into **five zones (Northern, Central, Eastern, Western and Southern)** and provided a zonal council for each zone.
- While forming these zones, several factors have been taken into account which include: **the natural divisions** of the country, the **river systems** and **means of communication**, the **cultural and linguistic affinity** and the requirements of **economic development, security and law and order**.
- Each zonal council consists of the following members:
 - Home Minister of Central government.
 - Chief Ministers of all the States in the zone.
 - Two other ministers from each state in the zone.
 - Administrator of each union territory in the zone
- In addition to the above Zonal Councils, a **North-Eastern Council** was created by a **separate Act of Parliament—the North-Eastern Council Act of 1971**.
 - Its members include **Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim**.
- These are **advisory bodies** that will discuss and make recommendations with regard to any matter of common interest in the field of economic and social planning between the Centre and States.

[Source: TH](#)

City Knowledge and Innovation Clusters

Six cities — **Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Jodhpur, Pune, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad** will be developed as City Knowledge and Innovation Clusters.

- The project is led by the office of the [Principal Scientific Advisor \(PSA\)](#) on a priority basis.
- These clusters will provide a **connect between the existing research and knowledge setups at institutions** and various industries that exist in the city or state.
 - A huge amount of knowledge and fiscal resources exist within a city or region. If these independent entities **connect through a virtual platform**, optimisation of resources can be achieved and various sectors will be able to work in partnership.
- The project will **assist industries in gaining access to existing technology**, and help academic institutions and R&D facilities commercialise this technology.
- Under the project each city cluster will have a **nodal office** headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who will be selected by the stakeholders. Government officials, such as municipal commissioners, will also be a part of the city cluster.
 - The nodal offices will be **run and funded by the PSA's office for the first three years**, within which time the stakeholders will have to look at how to make the initiative independent of government funding and sustainable.
- The aim of the project is that over a period of time, **city clusters will be able to bid for international projects and seek international funding** from organisations like the [World Bank](#).
- To enhance collaboration of research and facilities in the clusters, the government is also planning to set up **I-Stemm** (a web portal which will function as a nationwide inventory of all public funded institutions) as well as all scientific instruments and infrastructure.
- It can be noted that, Chandigarh has already experimented with a version of the project called **Chandigarh Region Innovation Knowledge Cluster (CRIKC)** where the city has opened its laboratories to students of Panjab University. The Chandigarh model has done well and the

government is looking to extend it to the rest of the state.

[Source: IE](#)

Plight of Foreign National Prisoners

Recently, the **Delhi High Court** has ordered the Central government to have the **speediest communication** with the embassy of the respective countries of the **foreign inmates who are in Indian jails**.

- According to recent data, **75% of foreign national inmates imprisoned in jails of Delhi** struggle in **accessing their embassy or consulate concerned after their arrest**.

Foreign National Prisoners

- Foreign National Prisoners (FNPs) refer to prisoners **who do not carry the passport of the country** in which they are imprisoned.
- As per Prison Statistics of India 2015, there are 6,185 FNPs in India.
- However, the **Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)'s report titled 'Strangers to Justice'**, held that the number of FNPs across 22 States and 4 Union Territories maybe 4000 approximately.
- Though FNPs are entitled to the basic minimum guarantees as enshrined in the Constitution of India, but FNPs in India faces several issues:
 - They often face a range of difficulties due to differences in language, culture, customs, religion or because of lack of family ties locally.
 - 90% of FNPs conveyed that they faced difficulty in securing bail merely because of their special status or due to "ever-inherent specific concern" that they may be difficult to locate if they get out on bail.
 - Only 5.7% of FNPs in India (222 out of 3,908), have ever received consular access.
- The Indian legal system does not create a distinction between Indian nationals and foreign nationals, especially in grants of bail. In this context, the Government must take concrete steps to remove this discrimination.

Suggestions

- In case FNPs are not granted bail their cases may be expedited.
- As soon as a foreign national is arrested in a major crime, the offense should be brought to the notice of the MEA through the State government by the DGP/CP concerned.
- Police and prison authorities must be made aware of the mandatory requirements and the form in which such a process would be required to be carried out.
- Ministry of External Affairs may request the consulates to visit their nationals to enable them to discharge their duties under the [Vienna Convention on Consular Relations](#).

[Source: TH](#)

Taxes and India's Equity Market

Recently, the Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI) has requested the government to withdraw the [Long Term Capital Gains Tax](#) and **Securities Transaction Tax**.

- It highlighted the issues in taxation related to India's equity market, which makes the **Indian capital market unattractive globally**.
 - India is the **only country** to levy a tax on equity trading in the form of **Securities Transaction Tax (STT)**.
 - Dividends, currently are **taxed thrice** in the form of **corporate tax, dividend distribution tax and finally at the investor level, i.e Securities Transaction Tax (STT)**.
- **Corporate Tax**: It is levied on a **firm's profit** by the government.
 - It is taxed on **operating earnings after expenses have been deducted**.
 - The rate of corporate tax in India varies from one type of company to another i.e. domestic corporations and foreign corporations pay tax at different rates **(25-50%)**
- **Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT)**: Dividend refers to the distribution of profits to shareholders of a company.
 - Thus, the dividend distribution tax is a type of tax that is **payable on the dividends** offered to its shareholders by the corporate.
 - Higher dividends mean a greater tax burden for the corporate entity.
 - Presently, the dividend distribution tax that is payable on the dividends offered to a company's shareholders is **15%** of the gross amount distributed as dividend
- **Securities Transaction Tax(STT)**: It is a tax levied at the time of purchase and sale of securities listed on stock exchanges in India.
 - Both purchaser and seller both need to pay **0.1%** of share value as STT.

[Source:TH](#)

Perseid Meteor Shower

The Perseid Meteor Shower, which has been active from 17th July 2019 onward, can be seen until 26th August, 2019.

- The Perseids occur as the Earth runs into pieces of cosmic debris left behind by **the comet Swift-**
- The cloud of debris is about 27 km wide — and at the peak of the display, between 160 and 200 meteors streak through the Earth's atmosphere every hour as the pieces of debris, travelling at some 2.14 lakh km per hour, burn up a little less than 100 km above the Earth's surface.
- The Perseids currently visible in the night sky **are not due to the debris left** behind by the **comet Swift-Tuttle** during its **most recent pass, which happened in 1992**.
 - This particular comet **goes around the Sun once every 133 years**, and the meteors now visible were left behind by the pass before the last one — or perhaps even earlier.

Meteor Shower

- The cosmic debris are the **remnants of comets** — great frigid chunks of matter that leave behind dirty trails of rocks and ice that linger long after the comets themselves have passed.
- **As the Earth wades through this cloud of comet waste**, the bits of debris create what appears from the ground to be a **fireworks display in the sky** — known as a meteor shower.

- **Meteor showers take their name from the location of the radiant.**

- The Perseid radiant is in the constellation Perseus. The Geminid meteor shower, which is observed each December, is named for a radiant in the constellation Gemini.

[Source: IE](#)

National Youth Awards

The **Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports** has conferred the **National Youth Awards on individuals and organizations** for excellent work and contribution in different fields of development and social services, such as health, promotion of human rights, active citizenship, community service etc.

About the Awards

- The award is conferred on young men and women and voluntary organization every year in recognition of their outstanding work in the field of **national development and social service**.
- **Objective:** To motivate young people (**aged between 15 - 29 years**) to achieve excellence in the field of national development or social service.
 - To encourage young people to develop a sense of responsibility to the community and thus to improve their own personal potential as good citizens.
 - To give recognition to the outstanding work done by voluntary organizations working with the youth for national development and/or social service.
- **Persons employed in any government service** i.e. with the Central/State Governments, PSUs/Universities, Colleges/Schools, etc. are **not eligible** for the award.
- The award is conferred **once in a lifetime**.
- **Prize:** The individual award comprises of a medal, a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 50,000/-. The award to a youth organisation includes a medal, a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 2,00,000/.

[Source: PIB](#)

Wild Buffalo

Recently, the government has decided to translocate five female wild buffaloes from [Manas National Park](#) in Assam to **Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary in Raipur district, Chhattisgarh**.

- This will be the **longest such translocation** in the country ever, that seeks to **revive** the waning population of **Chhattisgarh's State animal**.
- **The survival hazard of inbreeding, poaching for horns and increasing male population** have necessitated the translocation.
- The Central India Wild Buffalo Recovery Project aims to stabilise the wild buffalo population in Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve.

Wild Buffalo (Bubalus arnee)

- The wild buffalo is mainly found in the alluvial grasslands, marshes, swamps and river valleys. They are generally found in areas that have plenty of water holes and resources

- The estimated population of the wild buffaloes in the Northeast is around 3,000-4,000, the largest in the country and accounting for **92% of the world population**.
- It is listed under **Schedule 1** of the [Wild Life \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#).
- It is classified as **endangered** in the [IUCN Red List](#) of Threatened Species.

[Source:TH](#)

World Elephant Day

Every year World Elephant Day is observed on **August 12** to spread worldwide awareness for the **conservation and protection** of elephants from the numerous threats they face.

- It was launched on August 12, 2012, to bring attention to the urgent plight of **Asian and African elephants**.
- **Escalation of** poaching, habitat loss, [human-elephant conflict](#) and mistreatment in captivity are some common threats to both African and Asian elephants.

Elephants

- There are **three subspecies** of Asian elephant – the Indian, Sumatran and Sri Lankan.
 - The Indian has the widest range and accounts for the majority of the remaining elephants on the continent.
- African elephants are listed as **“vulnerable”** and Asian elephants as **“endangered”** in IUCN Red List of threatened species.
- The elephant has been accorded the highest possible protection under the Indian wildlife law through its listing under Schedule I of the [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#).
- Government of India has launched various initiatives for [conservation of elephants](#).

[Source: TH](#)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/13-08-2019/print>