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PRS Capsule February 2019

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Key Highlights of PRS

- Interim Union Budget 2019-20
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- Macroeconomic Development
 - GDP grows at 6.6% in the third quarter of 2018-19
 - Repo and reverse repo rate reduced to 6.25% and 6% respectively
- Cabinet
 - Union Cabinet approves promulgation of five Ordinances and the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Amendment Order, 2019
- Finance
 - The International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019 introduced in Rajya Sabha
 - Standing Committee submits report on strengthening the credit rating framework
 - Cabinet approves abolition of income tax ombudsman and indirect tax ombudsman
- Agriculture
 - PM-KISAN scheme launched
 - CCEA approves creation of Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund
 - Draft National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy released
 - Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog constituted for conservation and development of cows
- Commerce
 - Draft National e-Commerce Policy released for consultation
- Law and Justice
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 - Ordinance on triple talaq re-promulgated
 - The President of India notified a new circuit bench of the Calcutta High Court at

Jalpaiguri (in West Bengal)

- Tribal Affairs
 - 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill introduced in Rajya Sabha
 - Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Third Amendment) Bill, 2019 passed by Rajya Sabha to amend the list of Scheduled Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh
 - Union Cabinet approves revision in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Chhattisgarh
 - Ministry of Tribal Affairs launches various schemes
- Health and Family Welfare

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- Culture

Select Committee on Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Bill submits report
- Labour

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan launched
- Social Justice and Empowerment
 - Cabinet approves proposal of Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities
 - Tenure of National Commission for Safai Karmacharis extended for three years
- Food Processing

The National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019 introduced in Rajya Sabha
- Information Technology
 - Cabinet approves National Policy on Electronics 2019
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CCEA approves PM JI-VAN Yojana for increasing ethanol supply
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Lighthouse projects challenge launched
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 - President of Argentina and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia visit India
 - Prime Minister of India visits Republic of Korea

Interim Union Budget 2019-20

Interim Union Budget 2019-20 presented

- The Union Finance Minister presented the Interim Union Budget for 2019-20.
- Key highlights include:
 - The government proposes to spend **Rs 27,84,200 crore** in 2019-20, which is 13.3% above the revised estimate (Rs 24,57,235 crore) of 2018-19.
 - **The receipts** (without borrowings) are expected to increase by **14.1%** from revised estimate (**Rs 18,22,837 crore**) of 2018-19 to **Rs 20,80,201 crore, owing** to higher estimated revenue from **GST and income tax**.
 - **The nominal GDP** for BE 2019-2020 has been projected at Rs 21007439 crore assuming 11.5% growth over the estimated GDP of Rs 18840731 crore for 2018-19 (RE).
 - Fiscal deficit (Rs 7,03,999 crore) and revenue deficit (Rs 4,70,214 crore) are targeted at 3.4% of GDP and 2.2% of GDP respectively, same as the revised estimates for 2018-19.
- Key policy proposals in the budget speech include:
 - **Agriculture: PM-KISAN scheme** will be launched under which **Rs 6,000 per year** will be directly transferred **to farmers** with cultivable land up to **two hectares**.
 - This amount will be paid in three instalments.
 - Rs 20,000 crore has been allocated in 2018- 19 and Rs 75,000 crore in 2019-20.
 - Under the **Kisan Credit Card scheme**, 2% interest subvention and 3% incentive for prompt repayment, which are available to agriculture, will be **extended to animal husbandry and fisheries**.
 - Earlier, farmers affected by natural calamities were provided interest subvention of 2% for one year. This will be extended to every year of the loan. Further, a 3% incentive will be provided for timely repayment of the loan.
 - **Labour: The Pradhan Mantri Shram-Yogi Maandhan scheme** will be launched to provide social security coverage to workers in the unorganised sector with a monthly income of up to Rs 15,000.
 - **A monthly pension of Rs 3,000** will be provided from **the age of 60 years**.
 - **The monthly contribution** of the worker will be **matched by the central government**.
- The major tax changes announced are:
 - **Rates:** The surcharge on income tax has been raised from 3% to 4%.
 - **Deductions:** For salaried individuals, standard tax deduction has been increased from Rs 40,000 to Rs 50,000.
 - Individuals earning an annual income of **up to five lakh rupees** will **not** have to **pay** any tax.
 - **Tax deducted at source:** Exemption from TDS on rent has been increased from Rs 1.8 lakh to **Rs. 2.4 lakh per year**.
 - The threshold for **TDS on interest on bank and post office deposits** has

been increased from **Rs 10,000 to Rs 40,000**.

- **Housing:** Currently, there is no presumptive rent on one self-occupied house. Interest on housing loan is deductible for one house. On sale of a house, capital gains deduction is available if the gains are invested in buying a house. For all these, the limit has been extended to two houses (**capital gains benefit** limited to **two crore rupees**).

Macroeconomic Development

GDP grows at 6.6% in the third quarter of 2018-19

- The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (at constant prices) of the country grew at 6.6% in the third quarter of 2018-19, over the corresponding period a year ago.
- This was lower than the 7% growth in the second quarter of 2018-19.
- GDP growth across economic sectors is measured in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA).

The growth rate of **combined GVA by all sectors** decreased from 7.3% in the third quarter of 2017-18 to **6.3%** in the third quarter of 2018-19.

Repo and reverse repo rate reduced to 6.25% and 6% respectively

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) released its sixth Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy Statement of 2018-19.
- **The policy repo rate** (the rate at which the RBI lends money to banks) was reduced from 6.5% to 6.25% by a majority vote of the members. Two of the six members voted to keep the rate unchanged.
- The reverse repo rate (the rate at which the RBI borrows money from banks) was reduced from 6.25% to 6%.
- The **marginal standing facility rate** (the rate at which banks can borrow additional money) and the **bank rate** (the rate at which the RBI buys or rediscounts bills of exchange) were reduced from 6.75% to 6.5%.

Cabinet

Union Cabinet approves promulgation of five Ordinances and the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Amendment Order, 2019

- **Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019:**
 - The Ordinance seeks to allow **for voluntary use of the Aadhaar** number by authentication or **offline verification**, with the consent of the Aadhaar number holder.
 - It would give an option to children who are Aadhaar number holders to **cancel their Aadhaar number** on reaching eighteen years of age.

- **Homeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019:**
 - The Homeopathy Central Council Act, 1973, was amended in 2018 to provide for **supersession and reconstitution of the Central Council within one year.**
 - **In the interim period,** the central government was **to constitute** a Board of Governors.
 - The Ordinance seeks to extend the period of reconstitution of the Central Council from one year to two years.
- **New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Ordinance, 2019:**

The Ordinance seeks to establish the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC), to create an independent and autonomous regime for institutionalised arbitration.
- **Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019:**

The Ordinance, among other provisions, seeks to amend the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005, **to allow trusts to set up a unit in Special Economic Zones.**
- **The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019:**
 - The Ordinance seeks to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004.
 - The Act provides **three percent reservation** in **state government jobs** for people living **within 6 km of the Line of Control** in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - The Ordinance seeks to **extend this reservation** to persons residing in **areas adjoining the International Border** as well.
- **The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Amendment Order, 2019:**
 - It seeks to amend the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954.
 - The Order makes various provisions of the Constitution of India applicable to Jammu and Kashmir.
 - **The 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act** provides for ten percent **reservation for economically weaker sections** in **educational institutions and public employment.**
 - The Amendment Order seeks to extend this reservation to Jammu and Kashmir.
 - The benefits in **promotions to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** under the Constitution will also be made **applicable to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.**

Finance

The International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019 introduced in Rajya Sabha

- The Bill provides for the establishment of an authority to **develop and regulate** the **financial services market** in the **International Financial Services Centres** set up in **Special Economic Zones in India.**
- Key features of the Bill include:

- Constitution of the **International Financial Services Centres Authority**:
 - The Bill provides for the establishment of the International Financial Services Centres Authority.
 - The Authority will consist of **nine members**, including representation from RBI, SEBI, IRDA, PFRDA, and the Ministry of Finance.
- **Functions of the Authority**: The Authority will **regulate** financial **products**, financial **services**, and financial **institutions** in IFSCs.

Standing Committee submits report on strengthening the credit rating framework

- The Standing Committee on Finance submitted its report on '**Strengthening of the Credit Rating Framework in the country**'.
 - A rating agency is a company that assesses the financial strength of companies and government entities, especially their ability to meet principal and interest payments on their debts.
- Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Regulatory framework**: The credit rating agencies in India have progressed from rating **simple debt products** to complex debt structures, covering a wide range of products and services like **securities**, bank loans, **commercial papers**, and fixed deposits.
 - In India, the SEBI primarily regulates credit rating agencies and their functioning.
 - However, certain other regulatory agencies, such as the RBI, IRDA, and PFRDA also regulate certain aspects of credit rating agencies under their sectoral jurisdiction.
 - **The SEBI (Credit Rating Agencies) Regulations, 1999** provide for a **disclosure-based regulatory regime**, where the agencies are required to **disclose** their **rating criteria, methodology**, default recognition policy, and guidelines on dealing with conflict of interest.
 - The SEBI is among the few regulators globally to mandate public disclosure of rating criteria and methodology by the agencies.
 - **Change in regulations**: The **rating** of an instrument or entity is being increasingly **relied upon** by **capital markets, bankers** and **investors** and constitutes a key input for financial decision-making.
 - In the Indian context, the credibility of credit rating has come into question in the **crisis** involving the Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Limited (**IL&FS**), a major infrastructure development and finance company of systemic importance, with a **debt obligation of Rs 91,000 crore**.
 - The credit rating agencies **ignored the rising debt levels at IL&FS**, and continued rating it AAA, indicating the highest level of creditworthiness.
 - In this regard, the Committee recommended that **the regulators should review their regulations** and suitably modify them **to ensure** greater

objectivity, **transparency** and credibility in the whole credit rating framework.

- The Committee also recommended that the Ministry of Finance should seek a **factual report from the concerned regulators** regarding the **enforcement** of the regulations.

Cabinet approves abolition of income tax ombudsman and indirect tax ombudsman

- The Union Cabinet approved the **proposal for abolition** of institutions of **income tax ombudsman** and **indirect tax ombudsman**.

The institutions of tax ombudsman were **created to deal with public grievances** related to **settlement of complaints** on income tax and indirect tax matters.

- The decision to abolish them was taken due to:

The decision to abolish them was taken due to preference of alternative complaint redressal mechanisms by the public like **CPGRAMS** (Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System), **Aaykar-Seva-Kendras** and low effectiveness of the institutions of ombudsman as compared to these parallel channels of grievance redressal.

Agriculture

PM-KISAN scheme launched

- The central government launched the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme.
- Under the scheme, small and marginal landholder farmer families, i.e. families with total cultivable holding of up to two hectares, will be provided income support of **Rs 6,000 per year**.

The scheme seeks to supplement their **financial needs in procuring inputs** for appropriate crop health and yields.

- The amount is payable in **three equal instalments**, every four months, through **direct benefit transfer** to bank accounts.

The first instalment is being provided for the four-month period from December 2018 to March 2019.

- **Eligibility:** Farmer families collectively owning cultivable land of **up to two hectares** (as per land records of the concerned state or union territory) are eligible for the scheme. However, **this excludes certain beneficiaries** of higher economic status:
 - the institutional land holders,
 - families with one or more members as government employees,
 - families with one or more members as income tax payers.
- **Funding:** The scheme will be **funded by the central government**, and is estimated

to incur an expenditure of **Rs 75,000 crore per year**.

The same amount has been allocated to the scheme in 2019-20.

CCEA approves creation of Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the creation of an Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund of Rs 2,000 crore.
- This Fund is aimed for development and up-gradation of infrastructure in **10,000 gramin agricultural markets** and **585 regulated wholesale markets**.
- This corpus fund will be created with the assistance of NABARD.
- It will be used to **provide subsidised loans to states** and union territories against their **proposals for development** of infrastructure in **gramin agricultural markets** and **regulated wholesale markets**.
- The Fund may also be used to **provide assistance to states** and union territories for **innovative integrated market infrastructure projects**.
- **The National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme** and other government schemes will be used **to strengthen** the **physical** and basic infrastructure in gramin agricultural markets.

Draft National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy released

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has released the draft National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy.
 - **Aquaculture** (or aqua-farming) refers to the farming of **fish, algae** and **other aquatic organisms**, and **aquatic plants**.
- Key features of the draft policy include:
- **Inland fisheries:** The policy measures recommended for inland fisheries include:
 - the **conserving indigenous resources**, and restoring natural ecosystem of rivers,
 - **transferring management of fisheries** in man made reservoirs to the state fisheries departments for scientific enhancement and efficient governance,
 - **conserving and restoring ecosystem** in natural wetlands, and bringing policies, law,
 - conservation programmes for **development of fisheries in the Himalayan** and north-eastern states.
- **Aquaculture:** Measures recommended for development of aquaculture include:
 - the developing state and area-specific action plans,
 - redefining land use categories to include fisheries and aquaculture as components of agriculture,
 - developing separate programmes for small farmers,
 - simplifying requirements for registration and leasing of farms,
 - developing the required regulatory frameworks.
- Other policy measures include:

- making registration of all aquaculture inputs compulsory,
- **regulating exotic species,**
- diversifying species,
- developing post-harvest and marketing infrastructure,
- **strengthening fisheries cooperatives.**

Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog constituted for conservation and development of cows

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has constituted an apex advisory body, **Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog** for the **conservation, protection and development** of cows and their progeny.
- Other objectives of the Aayog include:
 - the proper implementation of laws with respect to **prohibition of slaughter and cruelty to cows,**
 - providing direction to cattle development programmes and schemes,
 - enhancing dairy production and productivity,
 - **sustainable development** and upgradation of **genetic resources of cows.**

Commerce

Draft National e-Commerce Policy released for consultation

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade released the 'Draft National e-Commerce Policy: **India's Data for India's Development**', for consultation.
- The policy addresses following **six broad issues** of the **e-commerce ecosystem**:
 - Data
 - Infrastructure development
 - E-commerce marketplaces
 - Regulatory issues,
 - Stimulating the domestic digital economy,
 - Export promotion through e-commerce.
- Key features of the e-commerce policy include:
 - **Data:** Creating a legal and technological framework for **imposing restrictions on cross-border data flow** from specified sources, including data generated by users in India on **e-commerce platforms, social media** and **search engines.**
 - It lays down **certain conditions** for **businesses** regarding **collection or processing of sensitive data** locally and **storing it abroad.** These are:
 - all data stored abroad shall not be made available to business entities outside India, even with the customer's consent;
 - such data should also not be made available to a third party,
 - and such data should **not be shared with a foreign government,** without the prior permission of Indian authorities.

- **Foreign direct investment:** The policy aims at **demarcating** what constitutes a **marketplace model** and what comprises an **inventory-based model** of sale and distribution.
 - It aims at inviting and **encouraging** foreign investment in the **'marketplace' model alone**.
 - This implies that an **e-commerce platform**, in which **foreign investment has been made, cannot exercise ownership or control over the inventory** sold on its platform.
- **Custom duties:** The draft policy recommends **the current practice of not imposing custom duties** on **electronic transmissions** must be reviewed.
- **Export promotion:** There is a **need to incentivise exports** and **reduce administrative requirements** and **costs** for outbound shipments.
 - The existing limit of Rs 25,000, above which products are exported through **cargo mode**, should **be increased for courier mode**.
 - This would make Indian e-commerce exports attractive even for **high-value shipments through courier mode**.

Law and Justice

The Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian Bill, 2019 introduced in Rajya Sabha

Key features of the Bill include:

- **Registration of marriages:** Every Non-Resident Indian (NRI) who marries a citizen of India in India must get his marriage registered in India within thirty days.
 - Every NRI who marries **an Indian citizen or another NRI outside India**, must get his marriage registered with the **Marriage Officer**, within **thirty days**.
 - **The Marriage Officer** is **appointed** from among the **diplomatic officers** in a **foreign country**.
- **Impounding of passport:** In case an NRI marries an Indian citizen or another NRI, and **fails to register the marriage within thirty days**, the **passport authority** may **impound or revoke the passport** of the NRI.
- **Issue of summons and warrants:** If the person summoned by a court, does not appear before it, it may issue and upload a warrant for arrest on the **website** of the **Ministry of External Affairs**.

Ordinance on triple talaq re-promulgated

- **The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Second Ordinance, 2019** was promulgated on February 21, 2019.
- A similar Bill, **The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2018**, was

also passed by Lok Sabha in December 2018 and the government had approved amendments to be moved in Rajya Sabha.

- The Ordinance makes **all declaration of talaq**, including in **written** or **electronic** form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and **illegal**.
- **Offence and penalty:** The Ordinance makes declaration of talaq a **cognizable offence**, attracting **up to three years' imprisonment** with a fine.
- **Allowance:** A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, **is entitled** to seek **subsistence allowance** from her husband for herself and for her dependent children.

The amount of the allowance will be determined by the Magistrate.

The President of India notified a new circuit bench of the Calcutta High Court at Jalpaiguri (in West Bengal).

- The President of India after consultation with the Governor of West Bengal and the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court issued the order. **The Calcutta High Court (Establishment of Circuit Bench at Jalpaiguri) Order, 2019.**
- The bench will comprise of judges of the Calcutta High Court, as decided by the Chief Justice of the High Court.
- The bench will exercise jurisdiction over cases arising in the districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, and Cooch Behar in West Bengal.

Tribal Affairs

125th Constitutional Amendment Bill introduced in Rajya Sabha

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Rajya Sabha.
- The Bill amends **provisions** related to the **Finance Commission and the Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution.

The Sixth Schedule relates to the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

- Key features of the Bill include:
 - **Village and Municipal Councils:** The Sixth Schedule states that tribal areas in certain regions of these four states will be '**autonomous districts**', each **administered** by a **District Council**.
 - Further, the **Governor may divide** an **autonomous district** into **autonomous regions**, each **administered** by a **Regional Council**.
 - The **Bill amends** this provision to **provide** for **Village and Municipal Councils** in addition to the District and Regional Councils.
 - Further, The District Councils may make laws on various issues, including:
 1. **the number of Village** and Municipal Councils to be formed, and

- their composition,
- 2. **delimitation of constituencies** for election to the Village and Municipal Councils,
- 3. and the powers and functions of these Councils.
- **Finance Commission:** The Bill empowers the Commission to make recommendations on measures to augment the Consolidated Fund of a state in order to provide resources to the District Councils, Village Councils, and Municipal Councils in tribal areas in the four states.

Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Third Amendment) Bill, 2019 passed by Rajya Sabha to amend the list of Scheduled Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh

- The bill was introduced and passed by Rajya Sabha to amend **the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950** in respect of **Arunachal Pradesh**.
It will **lapse upon the dissolution of the Lok Sabha**.
- The Bill **inserts five entries for granting Scheduled Tribe** status to these communities. These are: (i) Galo, (ii) Mishmi-Kaman (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi), Taraon (Digaru, Mishmi), (iii) Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolang (Miji) (iv) Nocte, Tangsa, Tutsa, Wancho, and (v) Tai Khamti.
- The Bill **removes reference to six tribes**. These are: (i) Abor, (ii) Galong, (iii) Khampti, (iv) Mishmi (Idu, Taroon), (v) any Naga tribes, and (vi) Momba.

Union Cabinet approves revision in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Chhattisgarh

- The Union Cabinet **approves for certain amendments** to the **list of scheduled tribes** in **Chhatisgarh** in **the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2016**.
- The 2016 Bill seeks to amend the **Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950** and the **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950**.
The two Orders were issued by the President under the Constitution (**Article 341** for Schedule Castes, and **Article 342** for Schedule Tribes) specifying the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) of all states.
- **For Chhatisgarh**, the Bill seeks **to clarify equivalent names** of the following communities that are **already mentioned in the list** of STs:
 - Bhuinya, Bhuiyan, Bhuyan;
 - Dhanwar, Dhanuhar, Dhanuwar;
 - Nagesia, Nagasia, Kisan;
 - and Sawar, Sawara, Saunra, Saonra.
- It adds '**Binjhia**' to the list of STs in Chhattisgarh.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs launches various schemes

- **Schemes of Minimum Support Price and Value Addition:** under the scheme the

remunerative MSP will be increased from 30% to 40% for **50 commercially viable items (MFP-Minor Forest Produce)** to the tribals.

- **The Van Dhan Scheme:**

- The tribals presently get **only 20-30%** of the **value chain** of the MFPs. The Van Dhan scheme aims to take this share to 70 to 80%.
- Approximately **6000 Van Dan Vikas Kendras** are proposed to be set up.
 - These Kendras are intended to provide employment to almost 45 lakh tribals.
 - Each Kendra will comprise 300 tribal gatherers.

- **The TRIFOOD Scheme:**

- The Scheme is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).
- Under the Scheme, **a tertiary value addition center** will be set up in **Jagdalpur** in Chhattisgarh and **Raigad** in Maharashtra.

The traditional Mahua tribal drink will be mainstreamed and marketed all over the Country under this project.

- **The "Friends of Tribes" initiative.** Under this initiative, TRIFED has tied up **CSR** (Corporate Social Responsibility) **funds** to promote tribal livelihoods.

Under the Companies Act, 2013, companies above a certain specified net worth, turnover or profits are required to spend 2% of their average net profits in the last three financial years, towards activities under its CSR policy.

Health and Family Welfare

Cabinet approves setting up of new AIIMS in Haryana

The Union Cabinet approved the **establishment** of a **new** All India Institute of Medical Sciences (**AIIMS**) in **Manethi, Rewari, Haryana**.

Culture

Select Committee on Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Bill submits report

- The Select Committee of Rajya Sabha examined the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Bill, 2018**.

The Bill amends the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

- Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:

- **Prohibited area:** The Construction is not permitted in the prohibited area (area of **100 metre**) **around a protected monument**, except under certain

conditions. The **Bill seeks to permit construction of public works** in prohibited areas for public purposes.

It recommended that a systematic study should be conducted by experts to **determine a rational area limit** (in some cases there is no reason to keep 100 metre as prohibited area) for prohibiting construction around a monument to ensure its preservation.

- **Public works:** The Bill defines 'public works' as construction of any infrastructure that is financed and carried out by the central government for public purposes.
 - **Such infrastructure** must be **necessary for public safety and security**, and must be based on a specific instance of danger to public safety.
 - The Committee recommended that this definition should cover **public utility projects** for providing **convenience to the public**.

Labour

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan launched

- The Ministry of Labour and Employment notified a **voluntary pension scheme** called the **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan, 2019**.
 - It intends to provide a **minimum assured pension** to workers in the **unorganized sector**.
- Key features of the scheme include:
 - **Eligibility:** The Scheme will apply to unorganised workers between the ages of **18 and 40 years** with monthly income of up to Rs 15,000.
 - The subscriber should **not be covered** under the **National Pension Scheme, Employees' State Insurance Corporation Scheme** or **Employees' Provident Fund Scheme**.
 - **Unorganised workers** include persons engaged as home-based workers, **street vendors**, or **domestic workers**.
 - **Minimum assured pension:** Each subscriber under the scheme shall receive a **minimum assured pension of Rs 3000 per month** after attaining the **age of 60 years**.
 - The central government will match the contribution made by the beneficiary.
 - The government has notified **different monthly contribution** amounts **depending upon the age of joining**. For example, a person entering the scheme at 29 years of age will be required to contribute **Rs. 100 per month**.
 - **Family pension:**
 - **If the subscriber dies while receiving the pension**, his **spouse** will be entitled to **receive 50% of the pension** as **family pension**.

- **If he dies before the pension accrues** (i.e. before the age of 60 years), his **spouse** may either **join** the scheme by paying the contribution or may **exit the scheme** with **receiving** beneficiary's **contribution** along with accumulated **interest earned**.

Social Justice and Empowerment

Cabinet approves proposal of Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities

- The Union Cabinet approved the constitution of a Development and Welfare Board for De-Notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities.
- Previously, the National Commission for De-Notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Communities had recommended that **a Permanent Committee** should **be established** for these communities.
- This Board will be chaired by the Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog and will be responsible for completing the **process of identification** of:
 - **De-Notified**
 - **Nomadic**
 - **Semi-Nomadic** Communities that have **not yet been formally classified**.

Tenure of National Commission for Safai Karmacharis extended for three years

- The Union Cabinet approved the extension of the term of the National Commission for Safai Karmacharis for a period of three years starting from March 31, 2019.

Safai karmacharis refer to persons who are engaged in manually carrying, cleaning or disposing **of human excreta** or **for any sanitation work**.
- The Commission was set up as a statutory body under **the National Commission for Safai Karmacharis Act, 1993**.
 - The Act ceased to have effect from February, 2004. However, the tenure of the Commission has been extended as **a non-statutory body** under **the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013** (MS Act, 2013).
 - The Commission seeks to:
 - monitor implementation,
 - enquire into complaints regarding the contravention of the MS Act, 2013,
 - advise central and state governments on effective implementation of the Act,
 - and take suo-motu notice of matters related to non-implementation of the Act.

Food Processing

The National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019 introduced in Rajya Sabha

The Bill declares certain institutes of food technology, entrepreneurship, and management as institutions of national importance. These institutes are:

- National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, Kundli
- Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology, Thanjavur.

Information Technology

Cabinet approves National Policy on Electronics 2019

- The Union Cabinet approved the National Policy on Electronics 2019, proposed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**).
- The policy aims **to position India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM)**, by enabling the industry to compete globally.
- Key features of the approved policy include:
 - **Objectives:**
 - Promoting manufacturing and export in ESDM to achieve a turnover of USD 400 Billion by 2025
 - Improving ease of doing business for ESDM industry
 - Encouraging research and innovation in all sub-sectors of electronics
 - **Promoting competition:** The policy seeks to create a competitive ESDM sector by **incentivizing domestic manufacturing and exports**. This will be achieved by:
 - providing **suitable tax benefits** to the ESDM sector,
 - providing support for micro, small and medium enterprises in the ESDM sector,
 - and **exempting import duty on capital equipment** that is **not manufactured in India**.
 - **Standards: A standards development framework** will be set up based on **global benchmarks**, for electronics, information technology, and e-governance. **An institutional mechanism** will be set up within MeitY for mandating compliance with standards for electronics products.
 - **Research and innovation:**
 - creating **an ecosystem** for promoting **design and Intellectual Property**,
 - providing support for generation of **patents**,
 - and promoting research and start-ups in technology areas such as **5G** and **artificial intelligence**.
 - **Cyber security:** The policy proposes to:
 - enhance understanding of **cyber security issues** related to electronics

- products,
- promote use of **secure chips**,
- and promote a **start-up ecosystem** for the **development of cyber security products**.

Cabinet approves National Policy on Software Products 2019

- The Union Cabinet approved the National Policy on Software Products 2019.
- The policy aims to develop India as **the global software product hub**, driven by:
 - innovation,
 - improved commercialisation,
 - sustainable intellectual property,
 - and promoting technology start-ups.
- The policy has the following **five Missions**:
 - To promote the creation of a **sustainable** Indian software product industry, driven by **intellectual property**.
 - To nurture **10,000 technology startups** in the software product industry, including **1,000 startups** in **Tier II and Tier III towns**.
 - To create a **talent pool for software product industry** through:
 - up-skilling of 10 lakh IT professionals
 - motivating one lakh school and college students,
 - and generating **10,000 specialised professionals** to provide **leadership**.
 - To build a **cluster-based innovation driven ecosystem** by developing 20 **sectoral and strategically located** software product development clusters.
 - **A National Software Products Mission** will be set up with participation from government, academia, and industry, to monitor schemes and programmes for the implementation of this policy.
- **An outlay of Rs 1,500 crore** is estimated to implement the programmes and schemes under the policy, over the next seven years. This amount will be divided across two funds:
 - **Software Product Development Fund.**
 - **Research and Innovation Fund.**

Environment

Standing Committee submits report on the status of forests in India

- The Standing Committee on Science & Technology, Environment & Forests submitted its report on the **'Status of Forests in India'**.
- Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Definition of Forest:** The word 'Forest' is not defined in the Draft **National Forest Draft Policy 2018**. The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change

(MoEF) uses the definition of the term as provided by the Supreme Court. The Court defined forests to include all forests statutorily recognised under the **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980**.

This definition did **not include** ecosystems which don't have forest-like attributes, such as **wetlands** or **grasslands**. Therefore, it recommended that MoEF come out with a **comprehensive and clear definition** of the term 'Forest'.

- **Forest cover:** There is concern about the **decline in the forest cover in the north-eastern states**, which constitute 65.3% of its geographical area in comparison to the national forest cover of 21.5%.
It recommended that the concerned state governments and MoEF take necessary steps to ensure that the decline in forest cover in these states is curbed at the earliest.
- **Deforestation:** The budget allocation to **National Afforestation Programme** has been insufficient.
 - This has affected the achievement of the **annual targeted area of afforestation** during the last few years.
 - **The funding pattern** for the Programme changed in 2015-16 from a **100% centrally sponsored scheme** to a **60-40 sharing scheme** between the **centre and state**.
 - Therefore, the Committee recommended that the concerned state governments provide their share of the changed funding pattern to ensure the success of the Programme.

Petroleum and Natural Gas

CCEA approves PM JI-VAN Yojana for increasing ethanol supply

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (**Jaiv Indhan - Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran**) Yojana.
- Under the scheme, **financial support** in the form of **viability gap funding (VGF)** will be provided to **integrated bioethanol projects** which produce ethanol **using dry plant biomass** and other **renewable feedstock** like plant and algal materials.
Viability Gap Funding (VGF) means a **grant to support projects** that are economically justified but not financially viable.
- The scheme aims to **incentivise the production** of **ethanol** through these sources, and **increase the supply of ethanol**.
- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas seeks **to achieve 10% ethanol blending** in petrol by 2022 under the **Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme**.
- The ethanol produced by the **scheme beneficiaries** will be **mandatorily supplied** to oil **marketing companies** to increase the blending percentage.

Power

Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (KUSUM) approved

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the launch of Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (KUSUM).
- The scheme seeks to provide **financial** and **water security to farmers**.
- The scheme aims to **add solar capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022**.
- The proposed scheme consists of three components:
 - **Component-A:** 10,000 MW of decentralised **ground mounted** grid connected renewable power plants.
 - Under this component, renewable power plants of **capacity 500 kW to 2 MW** will be setup by individual **farmers/cooperatives/panchayats/ farmer producer organisations** on their **barren or cultivable lands**.
 - The power generated will be **purchased** by the **distribution companies**.
 - **Component-B:** Installation of 17.5 lakh standalone solar powered agriculture pumps.

Under this component, individual farmers will be supported to install standalone solar pumps of up to 7.5 HP capacity.
 - **Component-C:** Solarisation of **10 lakh grid-connected solar powered** agriculture pumps.

Under this component, individual farmers will be supported to solarise pumps of up to 7.5 HP capacity.

Housing and Urban Affairs

Lighthouse projects challenge launched

- Under **Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC)**, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has launched a challenge for states and union territories (UTs) **to select six sites across the country** for the construction of **lighthouse projects**.

These selected sites will be used as an **'open laboratory'** for live demonstration of housing technology.
- The winning states/UTs will receive **central assistance** to construct these lighthouse projects as per guidelines under the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban**.
- A **Technology Innovation Grant** will be provided to the states/UTs **to offset** the impact of any **additional cost** implication due to the **use of new technology** and to provide for any other issues.

Textiles

Ministry of Textiles launches scheme for development of knitting and knitwear

- The Ministry of Textiles launched a new scheme: **The Development of knitting and knitwear sector.**
- The main components of the scheme include:
 - **creation of new service centers** on Public Private Partnership (**PPP**) model by industry and associations in the **knitting and knitwear clusters,**
 - **modernization and upgradation** of **existing** power loom service centres and institution run by **Textile Research Associations** and **Export Promotion Councils Association** in knitting and knitwear clusters,
 - and facilitation, awareness, studies, surveys, market development, and publicity for knitting and knitwear units.
- The knitting and knitwear sector is **predominantly MSME** in size and mainly located in **decentralized sector** and is one of the **major employment generator sectors.**
- It also has a significant contribution on the exports of textiles. The knitted fabrics contribute to **27% of the total fabric production** in India and **15% of knitted fabric is being exported.**

External Affairs

President of Argentina and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia visit India

Key agreements signed with the countries are:

- **Argentina:** India and Argentina signed 10 agreements in various sectors including: Defence, Tourism, Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture etc.
- **Saudi Arabia:** India and Saudi Arabia signed five agreements for cooperation in various fields including: Tourism, Housing, and bilateral investments.

Prime Minister of India visits Republic of Korea

- The Prime Minister visited the Republic of Korea.
- The countries signed six agreements in various areas including: Promoting collaboration among start-ups, Cooperation between law enforcement agencies, and facilitating exchange of knowledge in the field of road and transport.