



PRS Capsule May 2019

 drishtiias.com/printpdf/prs-capsule-may-2019

Key Highlights of PRS

- Education
 - Draft National Education Policy 2019
- Labour and Employment
 - Pension scheme for traders and shopkeepers
 - Annual Report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey
- Agriculture
 - Cabinet approves PM Kisan Pension Yojana for small and marginal farmers
 - Ambit of PM-KISAN scheme extended to include all farmer families
 - Cabinet approves programme for controlling diseases among livestock
- Finance
 - RBI publishes vision document on Payment and Settlement Systems in India
 - Working group submits its report on Foreign Portfolio Investors regulations
- Defence
 - Ministry introduces scheme for self certification of defence products
 - Changes to scholarship scheme under the National Defence Fund
- Petroleum and Natural Gas
 - Ministry notifies guidelines for sale of biodiesel for blending with diesel
 - High Level Committee recommends strategy to reduce import dependency
- Statistics and Programme Implementation
 - Merger of CSO and NSSO into National Statistics Office
- Energy
 - Connecting old solar off-grid plants to the grid

Education

Draft National Education Policy 2019 released

The Committee chaired by Dr. K. Kasturirangan submitted its report for Draft National Education Policy on May 31, 2019. The report proposes an Education Policy, which seeks to

address the challenges of: (i) access, (ii) equity, (iii) quality, (iv) affordability, and (v) accountability faced by the current education system. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:

- Extending the RTE Act to include early childhood education and secondary school education, thereby extending the coverage of the Act to all children between the ages of three to eighteen years. Currently, the RTE Act provides for free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of six to fourteen years.
- There should be no detention of children till class eight. Instead, schools must ensure that children are achieving age-appropriate learning levels.
- State Census Examinations for students of classes three, five and eight to track students' progress throughout their school experience.
- To reduce the stress levels of students, the Committee recommended restructuring the board examinations to test only core concepts, skills and higher order capacities.
- Restructuring of higher education institutions into three types: (i) research universities focusing equally on research and teaching; (ii) teaching universities focusing primarily on teaching but conducting significant research as well; and (iii) colleges focusing only on teaching in undergraduate education.
- Setting up of the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority which would replace the existing individual regulators in higher education, including professional education.

Labour and Employment

Pension scheme for traders and shopkeepers approved

The Ministry of Labour and Employment approved a voluntary minimum pension scheme for traders and shopkeepers. Key features of the scheme include:

- Each beneficiary under the scheme shall receive a minimum assured pension of Rs 3,000 per month after reaching the age of 60 years. The central government will match the contribution made by the beneficiary.
- The Scheme will apply to shopkeepers, self-employed persons, and retail traders with a GST turnover of less than Rs. 1.5 crore, between the ages of 18 and 40 years.

Annual Report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey released

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released the first Annual Report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey. The Report provides annual estimates relating to various aspects of employment and unemployment at the national and state level. Key results of the Survey include:

- The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for age 15-59 years was found to be 53%.

Of this, the LFPR for males was 80.2% and for females was 25.3%.

- The Worker Population Ratio (WPR) for age 15-59 years was 49.5%. Of this, the WPR for males was 74.9% and for females was 23.8%.
- On an all-India level, 52.2% of people had their major source of income from self employment; 24.9% had their major source of income from casual labour; and 22.8% from regular wage/salary.
- The all-India total unemployment rate was 6.1%. The unemployment rate was 6.2% for males, while it was 5.7% in case of females.
- Unemployment rate among urban workforce was 7.8%, while the unemployment rate for the rural workforce was 5.3%.

Agriculture

Cabinet approves PM Kisan Pension Yojana for small and marginal farmers

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Pension Yojana for small and marginal farmers.
- This scheme will provide farmers with a minimum fixed pension of Rs 3,000 per month on attaining the age of 60 years.
- It is a voluntary contribution-based scheme where the amount contributed by the farmer will be matched by the central government.
- Farmers between the age of 18 to 40 years will be eligible to start making contributions under the scheme.
- After the beneficiary's death (after the age of 60 years), their spouse will be entitled to receive 50% of the pension receivable as family pension, provided the spouse is not already a beneficiary under the scheme.

Ambit of PM-KISAN scheme extended to include all farmer families

- PM-KISAN scheme which was earlier applicable only for small and marginal landholder farmers has now been extended to all farmer families irrespective of the size of their landholdings.
- The revised scheme is expected to cover around two crore more farmers, increasing the coverage to around 14.5 crore beneficiaries. With this increase in coverage, expenditure on the scheme is estimated to increase from Rs 75,000 crore to Rs 87,218 crore in 2019-20.

Cabinet approves programme for controlling diseases among livestock

- The Union Cabinet has approved a programme for controlling certain diseases among livestock in the country. These include foot and mouth disease, and brucellosis.
- Foot and mouth disease is an infectious disease that causes fever, blisters inside the mouth and on the feet of animals thereby leading to lameness and excessive

salivation. The disease could reduce milk output in cows and buffaloes by up to 100% for a period of four to six months.

- Under the cabinet approved programme, vaccination would be provided to: (i) 30 crore bovines (cows, bulls and buffaloes), (ii) 20 crore sheep and goats, and (iii) one crore pigs at an interval of six months, to control Foot and mouth disease.
- Brucellosis causes early abortions and infertility in animals, and could reduce milk output by 30% during the entire life cycle of the animal.
- To control brucellosis, 3.6 crore female calves would be provided 100% vaccination coverage. The programme will be completely funded by the central government.

Finance

RBI publishes vision document on Payment and Settlement Systems in India

- The Reserve Bank of India has published the “Payment and Settlement Systems in India: Vision 2019-2021” document.
- The main aim of Payment Systems Vision 2021 is empowering every Indian with access to a bouquet of e-payment options that are safe, secure, convenient, quick and affordable.
- Further, it also aims to: (i) enhance the experience of customers, (ii) empower digital payment system operators and service providers, (iii) enable the digital payment ecosystem and infrastructure, and (iv) put in place a forward looking regulation.

Working group submits its report on Foreign Portfolio Investors regulations

A working group was constituted by SEBI to review the Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPI) Regulations, 2014. The Group has recently submitted its recommendations on the Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) regulations. Key recommendations of the Group include:

- Under current norms, FPIs are allowed to collectively invest up to 24% in a listed Indian company. The working group recommends Indian companies allowed to increase this limit up to the sectoral cap/ statutory ceiling in their sector as per the Foreign Exchange Management Act, with the approval of the Board of Directors.
- Setting the default investment limit to the sectoral cap and allowing companies to reduce this limit by way of a Board Resolution.
- Simplifying the certification and verification process for ‘Know your Customer’ (KYC).
- A fast-track registration process for a set of investors such as pension funds.

Defence

Ministry introduces scheme for self-certification of defence products

- The Ministry of Defence introduced a scheme to allow for self-certification of defence

- products manufactured by Defence Public Sector Undertakings and private vendors.
- Self certification implies that the responsibility of certifying the quality of the product will be that of the vendor.
 - The objective of the scheme is to encourage vendors to assume direct responsibility to sustain and improve the quality of products.
 - Self-certification status will be granted by the Directorate General of Quality Assurance, based on an assessment of the quality management system put in place by the vendor, and other parameters.
 - This status will be awarded for a period of three years. Self-certification status may be revoked in case any deficiencies in quality and reliability of the product are observed by the user.

Changes to scholarship scheme under the National Defence Fund approved

- The Prime Minister's Scholarship Scheme is a scheme being implemented under the National Defence Fund. It seeks to encourage technical and post-graduate education for widows and children of deceased/ex-service personnel of the Armed Forces, Paramilitary Forces, and Railway Protection Force.
- The Prime Minister has recently approved certain changes to the Prime Minister's Scholarship Scheme.
- As per new changes, the rates of scholarships have been increased from Rs 2,000 per month to Rs 2,500 per month for boys, and from Rs 2,250 per month to Rs 3,000 per month for girls. Also, the ambit of the scheme has been extended to include the children of state police officials who were killed during naxal or terror attacks.
- For the children of state police officials, 500 scholarships will be awarded per year. The Ministry of Home Affairs will be the nodal ministry for such cases.

Petroleum and Natural Gas

Ministry notifies guidelines for sale of biodiesel for blending with diesel

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has recently notified guidelines for sale of biodiesel for blending with diesel for transportation. Important points from the guidelines notified by the Ministry include:

- Permission for retail sale of biodiesel will be granted exclusively for sale of biodiesel (B-100) and not for any mixture of whatever percentage.
- Biodiesel permitted for sale should be indigenously produced and not imported.
- Separate boards in multiple languages should be prominently displayed at the biodiesel retail outlets displaying the percentage of Biodiesel allowed to be blended with diesel.
- A registration system for biodiesel manufacturers, suppliers and sellers will be devised at the state level.

- State Government authorities shall have the power to carry out regular inspections of the retail outlets selling biodiesel.

High Level Committee recommends strategy to reduce import dependency

- Recently, the High-Level Committee constituted by the government to examine issues relating to the Petroleum and Natural Gas sector has submitted its report on the same.
- The Committee examined the preparation of action plan to create synergy among research and development centres of oil and gas public sector undertakings (PSUs), tax issues, and ways to benefit from GST by the oil and gas PSUs.
- It recommended short term, medium term and long term strategies to reduce the import dependency of the nation.

Statistics and Programme Implementation

Merger of CSO and NSSO into National Statistics Office approved

- Currently, Central Statistics Office (CSO) is an attached Office and NSSO is subordinate Office under the control of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has recently approved merging of the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) into a single statistics wing, which will be known as the National Statistical Office (NSO).
- The National Statistical Office (NSO) so formed would be headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Energy

Connecting old solar off-grid plants to the grid approved

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy approved connecting the old solar off-grid power plants to the grid.
- The connections will be made in areas where reliable grid supply is now available with provision for net-metering.
- The connections will be subject to applicable regulatory provisions. Further, the cost of such connections will be borne by the respective state government or beneficiary departments.

Note:

- On-grid solar systems generate power only when the utility power grid is available and directly connected to the utility feed. On-grid systems send excess power generated to

the utility grid when you are overproducing.

- Off-grid systems allow you to store and save your solar power in batteries for use when the power grid goes down. It is meant to be entirely self-sustaining.
- Net metering is a billing mechanism that credits solar energy system (or plant) owners for the electricity they add to the grid.