

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION,
EMPOWERMENT ETC****“Web- Wonder Women” Campaign**

The Union Ministry of WCD has launched an online campaign, ‘#www : Web- Wonder Women’.

Web-Wonder Women Campaign

- Indian women have always been enterprising and have created a positive impact on society with their hard-work, experience and knowledge.
- #www: WebWonderWomen is a campaign to specially honour and encourage such voices that have in their own capacity driven a positive impact on social media platforms.
- The Campaign’s Partners aim to recognize the fortitude of Indian women stalwarts from across the globe that has used the power of social media to run positive & niche campaigns to steer a change in society.

Rules for Nomination

- The Campaign invites Entries via Nominations from across the world, as per the laid out criteria.
- Indian-origin women, working or settled anywhere in the world, are eligible for nomination.
- The shortlisted entries will be open for public voting on Twitter and the finalists will be selected by a specialized panel of judges.
- Nominations have been invited in a large number of categories including Health, Media, Literature, Art, Sports, Environmental protection, fashion among others.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Kerala High Court makes notice mandatory for strike and Hartals**

The High Court of Kerala has set a seven-day notice period for political parties and individuals to call for hartal and general strike in the State. The Kerala High Court has provided the following reasons for setting a seven-day notice period:

- To provide time for the citizens to approach the court with their objections and to enable courts to examine the legality of the hartal call on request of citizens.
- To provide an opportunity for the State to be prepared for safeguarding the interests of the citizens.
- Even though the court recognised the fundamental right of those who call for a strike to demonstrate their protests, it made it clear that the rights cannot be exercised in violation of the fundamental rights of other citizens.
- The court made it clear that the fundamental right of the citizens to life and livelihood would outweigh the fundamental right of persons calling for strikes and hartals.
- The court further said that since the call for hartals and general strikes denies the fundamental rights of traders, the general public, migrant labourers and those in unorganized sectors, those persons who call for hartals will be held responsible for the losses suffered due to the event.

Observations of the High Court

The court observed that Kerala’s economy had taken a severe hit during the recent devastating floods and the frequent strikes will only cause more sufferings for the economy of the state. Kerala’s economy is dependent on tourism and the travel advisories issued by foreign countries against visiting Kerala cannot be ignored. The Court noted that in 2018, 97 hartals and strikes had taken place in the State and in 2019 one hartal was called on January 3, Trade unions have also called for a two-day strike starting January 8. Frequent strikes like these are a cause of concern.

Govt plans to rename IFS:

The Centre has proposed another pro-tribal measure – renaming of the Indian Forest Service as Indian Forest and Tribal Service. The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has initiated an inter-ministerial consultation note to rename the service and also train its cadre to be more receptive towards tribals and forest dwellers.

Recommendations:

The recommendations to change the name of Indian Forest Service were made by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) in its annual report. The NCST had made the following observations in this regard:

- The NCST highlights the close ties between tribals, the forest and forest ecosystem as a resource base.
- NCST recommends the renaming of the Indian Forest Service into Indian Forest and Tribal Service in recognition of the close ties between tribals, the forest and forest ecosystem.
- NCST argues that merging forest and tribal welfare administrations will further the participation of 'tribals' in forest management.
- The NCST states that renaming will also engender greater sensitivity on the forest department's part towards the needs of 'tribal' communities.

Indian Forest Service: Indian Forest Service (IFoS) is one of the three All India Services of the Government of India. The other two All India Services being the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS). It was constituted in the year 1966 under the All India Services Act, 1951 by the Government of India. The British Government had constituted the Imperial Forest Service in 1867. The main mandate of the service is the implementation of the National Forest Policy in order to ensure the ecological stability of the country through the protection and participatory sustainable management of natural resources.

INDIAN ECONOMY

CAG report on the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management

The CAG report on Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management has been tabled in the parliament. The important observations made in the report are:

- CAG recommends the government to frame a policy on off-budget financing and sources of such funding in view of its fiscal implication.
- The off-budget financial arrangements defer committed liability (subsidy arrears/bills) or create future liability and increase the cost of subsidy due to interest payment.
- The report states that since the off-budget financing is outside the parliamentary control, it has implications for fiscal indicators as they "understate" the government's expenditure in the year by keeping them off the budget.
- Hence the CAG recommends the government to put in place a policy framework for off-budget financing which would specify the rationale and objective of off-budget financing, quantum of off-budget financing, sources of the fund among others.
- The CAG also recommends the government to consider disclosing the details of off-budget borrowings through disclosure statements in Budget as well as in accounts.

National programme for organic production

The Ministry of Industries and Commerce had initiated the National Programme for Organic Production to assist the organic producers to tap the market which is growing steadily in the both in domestic and export segments.

National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)

- APEDA- Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority is the implementation agency for the NPOP.
- The Ministry of Industries and Commerce is implementing the NPOP since 2001. The Objectives of the Program are
- To provide the means of evaluation of certification programme for organic agriculture and products as per the approved criteria.
- To facilitate the certification of organic products in conformity with the prescribed standards.
- To facilitate certification of organic products in conformity with the importing countries organic standards as per equivalence agreement between the two countries or as per importing country requirements
- To encourage the development of organic farming and organic processing.

APEDA: It is an export promotion organization under Ministry of Commerce & Industries, Government of India. It was established by the GOI under the APEDA Act passed by the Parliament in December 1985. APEDA replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEP). It is mandated with the responsibility of promotion and development of the export of its scheduled products.

RBI forms Nandan Nilekani-led digital payments panel

The RBI has constituted a high-level committee headed by former chairman of the UIDAI Nandan Nilekani to set up a robust digital payments ecosystem in the country. It aims to undertake

cross country analyses with a view to identify best practices that can be adopted in our country to accelerate digitization of the economy and financial inclusion through greater use of digital payments.

The committee has been asked to review the existing status of digitization of payments, identify gaps in the ecosystem and suggest ways to plug them. The panel has to suggest a medium-term strategy for deepening digital payments, and measures to strengthen safety and security. It shall submit its report within a period of 90 days from the date of its first meeting. The panel has also been tasked with the responsibility of increasing customer confidence and trust while they access financial services through digital modes.

Reasons for the step:

- The promotion of digital payments has been one of the primary agendas of the government in the past four years.
- Payments through all electronic forms such as debit and credit cards, mobile wallets, real-time gross settlement (RTGS), national electronic funds transfer (NEFT) and UPI has seen a huge rise.
- The newest mode of digital payments, UPI, which was launched in 2016, has witnessed an over 300% rise in transaction volumes in the last year and the growth is seen continuing in the near term.
- According to National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), a record 620.17 million UPI transactions worth just over Rs. 1 trillion were conducted in December 2018.

Issues related to Profiteering and National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA)

The NAA has been constituted under Section 171 of the Central GST Act, 2017 to ensure that the reduction in rate of tax or the benefit of input tax credit is passed on to the recipient by way of commensurate reduction in prices. Decision about the formation of the NAA comes in the background of rate reduction of large number of items by the GST Council in its 22nd meeting at Guwahati. At the meeting, the Council reduced rates of more than 200 items including goods and services. This has made tremendous price reduction effect and the consumers will be benefited only if the traders are making quick reduction of the prices of respective items. There was a concern that traders are reluctant to make price cut so that they can make profit.

Profiteering: Profiteering means unfair profit realized by traders by manipulating prices, tax rate adjustment etc.

In the context of the newly launched GST, profiteering means that traders are not reducing the prices of the commodities when the GST Council reduces the tax rates of commodities and services. Conventionally, several traders will have a strong tendency to quickly increase the price of a commodity whose tax rate has been increased. But on the opposite side, they may delay the price reduction of a commodity whose tax rate has been cut by the government. A delayed or postponed price reduction helps business firms to make higher profit. The losers here are the consumers.

Functioning of NAA

- The Authority's main function is to ensure that traders are not realizing unfair profit by charging high price from the consumers in the name of GST.
- Traders may charge high price from the consumers by naming the GST factor.
- Similarly, they may not make quick and corresponding price reduction when the GST Council makes tax cut. All these constitute profiteering.
- The responsibility of the NAA is to examine and check such profiteering activities and recommend punitive actions including cancellation of licenses.

Steps taken by the NAA to ensure that customers get the full benefit of tax cuts:

- Holding regular meetings with the Zonal Screening Committees and the Chief Commissioners of Central Tax to stress upon consumer awareness programmes;
- Launching a helpline to resolve the queries of citizens regarding registration of complaints against profiteering.
- Receiving complaints through email and NAA portal.
- Working with consumer welfare organizations in order to facilitate outreach activities.