

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**AP gets new railway zone called 'South Coast Railway'**

Indian Railways will be making a new zone in Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh named 'South Coast Railway'. Indian Railways' operations are currently divided into 17 zones, which are further sub-divided into divisions, each having a divisional headquarter. There are a total of 73 divisions at present.

South Coast Railway

- As per item 8 of Schedule 13 (Infrastructure) of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014, Indian Railways was required to examine establishing a new railway zone in the successor State of AP.
- The new zone named "South Coast Railway (SCoR)", will comprise of existing Guntakal, Guntur and Vijayawada divisions.
- Waltair division shall be split into two parts.
- One part of Waltair division will be incorporated in the new zone i.e. in South Coast Railway and will be merged with the neighbouring Vijaywada division.
- Remaining portion of Waltair division shall be converted into a new division with headquarter at Rayagada under East Coast Railway (ECoR).
- South Central Railway will comprise of Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Nanded divisions.

UN Women

The government of Odisha has been applauded by The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) for proposing 33% reservation for women in Parliament and the State Assemblies.

Background: The Odisha Assembly, in November 2018, passed a resolution by unanimous voice vote for providing 33% reservation for women in Legislative Assemblies and Parliament. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had initiated discussion on the motion.

UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women:

- UN Women is the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.
- In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
- It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:
 - Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).
 - International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).
 - Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI).
 - United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).
- The main roles of UN Women are:
 - To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
 - To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
 - To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**YuvaSahakar-Cooperative Enterprise Support and Innovation Scheme**

To cater to the needs and aspirations of the youth, the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has come up with a youth-friendly scheme for attracting them to cooperative business ventures. The newly launched scheme would encourage cooperatives to venture into new and innovative areas. It will be linked to Rs 1000 crore 'Cooperative Start-up and Innovation Fund (CSIF)' created by the NCDC.

Funding

- The funding for the project will be up to 80% of the project cost for these special categories as against 70% for others.
- The scheme envisages 2% less than the applicable rate of interest on term loan for the project cost up to Rs 3 crore including 2 years moratorium on payment of principal.

Eligibility

- It would have more incentives for cooperatives of North Eastern region, Aspirational Districts and cooperatives with women or SC or ST or PwD members.
- All types of cooperatives in operation for at least one year are eligible.

NCDC

- Nodal Agency: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

- The NCDC has the unique distinction of being the sole statutory organisation functioning as an apex financial and developmental institution exclusively devoted to cooperative sector.
- It supports cooperatives in diverse fields apart from agriculture and allied sectors.
- It is an ISO 9001:2015 compliant organisation and has a distinctive edge of competitive financing.

ShreyasScheme:

The Ministry of HRD has launched the Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS) for providing industry apprenticeship opportunities. It is a programme conceived for students in degree courses, primarily non-technical, with a view to introduce employable skills into their learning, promote apprenticeship and also amalgamate employment facilitating.

SHREYAS portal will enable educational institutions and industry to log in and provide their respective demand and supply of apprenticeship. The matching of students with apprenticeship avenues will take place as per pre-specified eligibility criteria.

Objectives of the Scheme

- To improve employability of students by introducing employment relevance into the learning process of the higher education system
- To forge a close functional link between education and industry/service sectors on a sustainable basis
- To provide skills which are in demand, to the students in a dynamic manner
- To establish an 'earn while you learn' system into higher education
- To help business/industry in securing good quality manpower
- To link student community with employment facilitating efforts of the Government

Operation of the Scheme

- The primary scheme will be operated in conjunction with National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) which provides for placing of apprentices upto 10% of the total work force in every business/industry.
- The scheme will be implemented by the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), initially the Banking Finance Insurance Services (BFIS), Retail, Health care, Telecom, Logistics, Media, Management services, ITES and Apparel.

Financing

- Under the NAPS scheme, Central Government shares 25% of the stipend per month subject to a maximum of Rs.1500 p.m during the period of the apprenticeship. Apart from that, an amount upto Rs.7500 will be met towards basic training cost, where needed.

Implementation

1st Track: Add-on apprenticeship

- The students who are currently completing the degree programme would be invited to choose a job role of their choice from a selected list of apprenticeship job roles given by the Sector Skill Councils of the MoSDE.
- At the end of the apprenticeship period, there would be a test conducted by the Sector Skill Council concerned and successful students would get skills certificate in addition to their degree certificate.

2nd track: Embedded Apprenticeship

- Under this approach, the existing B.Voc programmes would be restructured into B.A (Professional), B.Sc (Professional) or B.Com (Professional) courses – which would include a mandatory apprenticeship ranging from 6 to 10 months depending on the requirement of the skill.
- During the apprenticeship period, the student would get a monthly stipend of about Rs. 6,000 per month by the industry, 25% of which would be reimbursed under the NAPS programme.

3rd Track: Linking National Career Service with Colleges

- Under this, the National Career Service (NCS) portal of Ministry of Labour & Employment would be linked with the Higher Education institutions.
- As of now, more than 9,000 employers have posted requirement of more than 2 lakh vacancies, for which the students can get considered.

Concerns regarding PM-KISAN

That direct cash transfers (DCT) are the best way to support farmers — as opposed to subsidised supply of fertiliser and electricity or physical purchase of produce at above-market prices — is a well-established fact. The launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) by Prime Minister, therefore, welcome, except that it is too little too late.

PM-Kisan Yojna

- The scheme provides a flat Rs 6,000 per year to all small and marginal farmers owning up to 5 acres of land — an estimated 12 crore — payable in three instalments.
- There is no crop with a basic cultivation cost below Rs 10,000 per acre today.

Drawbacks Of scheme

- An instalment of Rs 2,000 under PM-Kisan would enable a farmer to barely buy Bt cotton seeds for two acres, meet his fertiliser requirement of wheat for two-thirds of an acre or harvest cane from one-sixth of an acre.
- So, even if the money is transferred directly into the farmer's Aadhaar-seeded bank sans any leakage, its utility from a purely agricultural standpoint is quite limited.
- Such a narrow time window and then blaming them — especially those ruled by the Opposition — for not showing interest in the scheme smacks of political opportunism.
- Telangana and Odisha have come out with DCT schemes that, even if primarily politically-inspired, are more meaningful and effectively designed.
- The Centre alone has, for 2019-20, budgeted a mammoth Rs 2,77,206crore towards food, fertiliser and crop loan subsidies. This is over and above the Rs 75,000 crore provision towards PM-Kisan.

Better Usage of Funds

- Abolishing the subsidy on fertiliser and farm credit — both of which have no real economic rationale — and limiting that on food to maintaining a minimum buffer stock to enable market intervention if necessary, it would be possible to create a Central DCT fund.
- The money from this can be used not only for resource-poor landowning farmers but even share-croppers, landless agricultural labourers and other vulnerable households in both rural and urban areas.
- And with Aadhaar-seeded bank accounts and digitisation of land records, it can be well-targeted too.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

Geneva Conventions

India has cited the Geneva Conventions while demanding the release of Wing Commander Abhinandan who is in Pak Army custody.

Geneva Conventions

- The 1949 Geneva Conventions are a set of international treaties that ensure that warring parties conduct themselves in a humane way with non-combatants as well as with combatants no longer actively engaged in fighting
- This include prisoners of war, and wounded or sick soldiers.
- All countries are signatories to the Geneva Conventions.

Present Context

- The provisions of the conventions apply in peacetime situations, in declared wars, and in conflicts that are not recognised as war by one or more of the parties.
- The IAF officer is a prisoner of war, and his treatment has to be in accordance with the provisions for PoWs under the Geneva Conventions.
- The Convention deals with every kind of situation including the place of internment, religious needs, recreation, financial resources, the kinds of work that captors can make PoWs do, the treatment of captured officers, and the repatriation of prisoners.

Protection offered under the Convention

- The Convention clearly mentions that prisoners must be treated humanely. The responsibility for this lies with the detaining power, not just the individuals who captured the PoW.
- Any unlawful act causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited.
- No prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind.
- Prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity.
- Measures of reprisal against prisoners of war are prohibited.
- The wide publicity given to the video recording of a blindfolded Wing Commander could be held as a violation of the Geneva Conventions.

Rights and Entitlements

- PoWs are entitled to respect for their persons and their honour.
- In captivity, a PoW must not be forced to provide information of any kind under physical or mental torture nor any other form of coercion.
- Refusal to answer questions should not invite punishment.
- A PoW must be protected from exposure to fighting.
- Use of PoWs as hostages or human shields is prohibited
- A PoW has to be given access to safety and evacuation facilities.
- Access to health facilities, prayer, recreation and exercise are also written into the Convention.

- The detaining power has to facilitate correspondence between the PoW and his family, and must ensure that this is done without delays.
- A PoW is also entitled to receive books or care packages from the outside world.
- Parties to the conflict are bound to send back or repatriate PoWs.
- The conflicting parties are expected to write into any agreement they may reach to end hostilities the expeditious return of PoWs.
- Parties to the conflict can also arrive at special arrangements for the improvement of the conditions of internment of PoWs, or for their release and repatriation.

Monitoring Geneva Convention

- Pakistan can decide to send Wing Commander Abhinandan unilaterally or negotiate his release with India.
- The Geneva Conventions have a system of Protecting Powers who ensure that the provisions of the conventions are being followed by the parties in a conflict.
- In theory, each side must designate states that are not party to the conflict as their Protecting Powers.
- In practice, the International Committee of the Red Cross usually plays this role.

Previous instances

- At the end of the 1971 war, India had more than 80,000 Pakistani troops who had surrendered to the Indian Army after the liberation of Dhaka.
- India agreed to release them under the Shimla Agreement of 1972.
- During the Kargil War, Pakistan returned Flt Lt Nachiketa, who was captured after ejecting from his burning Mi27, after keeping him for eight days.
- This was after intense diplomatic efforts by the Vajpayee government and by ICRC. Another PoW, Squadron Ldr Ajay Ahuja, was killed in captivity.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

India's first indigenous semiconductor chips for 4G/LTE and 5G NR modems

A Bengaluru based company SIGNALCHIP has fabricated high performance and cost-efficient semiconductor chips.

These would enable high-speed wireless communication.

Four chips designed by SIGNALCHIP

- SCBM3412: a single chip 4G/LTE modem including the baseband and transceiver sections in a single device
- SCBM3404: a single chip 4X4 LTE baseband modem
- SCRF3402: a 2X2 transceiver for LTE
- SCRF4502: a 2X2 transceiver for 5G NR standards

Specifications

- The RF sections cover all LTE/5G-NR bands upto 6 GHz.
- These chips also support positioning using India's own satellite navigation system, NAVIC.
- The combined multi-standard system-on-chip (SoC) can serve as a base station chipset for a wide range of form factors from low-cost indoor small cells to high performance base stations.
- Through the IPs created for devices, the company now has the potential to design products for multiple related fields.

Importance

- Currently, in India, all devices and infrastructure, whether imported or domestically manufactured, use imported silicon chips.
- Silicon chip design is a very challenging activity requiring high-cost R&D, deep knowhow and mastery of multiple complex domains.
- Hence, this technology is not available in most countries.

Impact

- Data Security is the paramount concern in the World today and India cannot remain secure in terms of data, unless it manufactures its own chips.
- India is just breaking into the elite club of the world and this will have huge implications for India's data security and data sovereignty, besides the positive economic implications.
- At present only 8 companies and a few countries can design and build semiconductor chips.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Wake up with determination. Go to bed with satisfaction.