

NATIONAL
NITI Aayog releases Second Delta Ranking under the Aspirational Districts Programme

NITI Aayog will release the Second Delta Ranking of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) .

Delta Ranking

- The ranking will measure the incremental progress made by districts.
- The districts have been ranked in a transparent basis on parameters across Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure through key performance indicators.
- The rankings are based on the data that is publicly available through the Champions of Change Dashboard, which includes data entered on a real-time basis at the district level.
- The rankings, for the first time, will also factor in inputs from household survey conducted by NITI Aayog's knowledge partners, namely, TATA Trusts and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).
- The first Delta ranking for the Aspirational Districts was released in June 2018.

Performance in 2018

- Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu has shown the most improvement overall, followed by Nuapada district in Odisha, Siddarthnagar in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar's Aurangabad and Koraput in Odisha.
- These districts have championed the development narrative in fundamental parameters of social progress.
- Nagaland's Kiphire district, Jharkhand's Giridih, Chatra in Jharkhand, Hailakandi in Assam, and Pakur in Jharkhand have shown least improvement.

Aspirational District Programme

- The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) is a essential retreat from India's previous development strategies in its ownership, scope, and scale based on "One-size-fits-all" approach. 115 districts were chosen by senior officials of the Union government in consultation with State officials on the basis of a composite index of the following:
 - deprivation enumerated under the Socio-Economic Caste Census,
 - key health and education performance indicators and the state of basic infrastructure
- A minimum of one district was chosen from every State.
- The areas under the programme that have been targeted for transformation are education, health and nutrition, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion, basic infrastructure and skills.
- There is no financial package or large allocation of funds to this programme
- Its aim is to leverage the resources of the several government programmes that already exist but are not always used efficiently.

New High Court for Andhra Pradesh

In pursuance of article 214 of the Constitution and the Order issued by the Supreme Court of India and in exercise of powers conferred under clause (a) of sub-section (1) of section 30, sub-section (1) of section 31 and sub-section (2) of section 31 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, the President has constituted a separate High Court for the State of Andhra Pradesh, namely, the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, from the 1st day of January, 2019 with the principal seat of such High Court at Amaravati in the State of Andhra Pradesh and the High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad shall become the High Court for the State of Telangana.

The new High Court for Andhra Pradesh will be the 25th High Court in the country. The new Andhra HC is expected to function from a temporary structure in Amaravati till a permanent building is set up at the 'Justice City' being planned in Amaravati.

Constitutional provisions related to High Court in India:

- Article 214 provides that every State shall have a High Court, however, Article 231 states that Article 214 shall not be a bar for constituting a common high court for two or more States.

- Only Parliament may by law establish a Common High Court for two or more States. This means that, unless Parliament by law establishes a Common High Court for two or more States, every State has to have a High Court, i.e., upon formation of a new State a new High Court is also formed.
- Article 216 provides that every High Court shall consist of a Chief Justice and such other number of judges as the President may from time to time deem necessary to appoint.
- Article 217 relates to appointment of HC judges.

Year End Review – 2018: Ministry of Tourism

Tourism Statistics:

- Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during January – November 2018 were 93,67,424 as compared to 88,67,963 in January – November 2017 (5.6% growth).
- During January – November 2018, 20,61,511 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 14,56,615 during January – November 2017 (41.5% growth).
- Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) during January – October 2018 were Rs. 1,58,846 Crore as compared to Rs. 1,41,965 Crore in January – October 2017 (11.9% growth).
- During 2017, the number of Domestic Tourist Visits to the States/UTs was 1652.5 million as compared as 1615.4 million in 2016, showing growth of 2.3% in 2017 over 2016.

Development of Tourism Infrastructure:

- Under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, seven projects have been sanctioned during 2018-19.
- Integrated development of identified pilgrimage destinations is being undertaken under the 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive' (PRASHAD) Scheme.
- Ministry of Tourism provided Central Financial Assistance for infrastructure development during 2018-19 to Cochin Port Trust and Mormugaon Port Trust.

'ADOPT A HERITAGE' Project:

- Ministry of Tourism in close collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) launched a "Adopt a Heritage Project".
- Objective – To provide world class facilities at the various natural/cultural heritage sites, monuments and other tourist sites.
- The project plans to entrust to private sector companies, public sector companies and individuals for the development of various tourist amenities.
- MoUs have been signed at the following sites:
 - Area surrounding Gangotri Temple & Trail to Gaumukh, Uttarakhand
 - Stok Kangri Trek, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir
 - Red Fort, New Delhi
 - Gandikota Fort, Andhra Pradesh
 - Surajkund, Haryana
 - Jantar Mantar, Delhi
 - Qutub Minar, Delhi
 - Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra
 - Let Palace, Jammu & Kashmir
 - Hampi (Hazara Rama Temple), Karnataka

Online Learning Management System:

- Ministry of Tourism launched an Online Learning Management System for creating skilled manpower to work as tourist facilitators.
- Objective – to enable the youth living in remotest part to skill themselves and facilitate tourists on Pan India basis.

Incredible India Mobile App:

Ministry of Tourism launched Incredible India Mobile App on 27th September, 2018 to showcase India as a holistic destination, revolving around major experiences, like spirituality, heritage, adventure, culture, yoga, wellness and more. The app has been equipped with features to assist the traveler in each phase of their journey to India.

Legacy Vintage Hotel:

- Ministry of Tourism has introduced the concept of Legacy Vintage Hotels to cover hotels constructed/built with materials from heritage properties/buildings (i.e. properties or buildings which were built/constructed/erected prior to the year 1950).
- Such hotels will help recreate the ambience and atmosphere of the bygone era.

Indian Culinary Institute (ICI), Noida Campus:

- The Indian Culinary Institute (ICI), Noida campus was inaugurated on 27th April, 2018 for starting culinary courses.
- The campus also has an “Indian Culinary Museum” where the rich historical and diversified culinary objects and other literature will be displayed.
- Objective – The main objective of ICI is to institutionalize a mechanism to support efforts intended to preserve, document, promote and disseminate information about Indian Cuisine, meet the sectoral requirement of specialists specific to Indian Cuisine, as also to promote ‘Cuisine’ as a Niche Tourism product.

ECONOMY**RBI Panel on Economic Capital Framework**

RBI has constituted a panel on economic capital framework. It will be headed by Ex-RBI governor Bimal Jalan. The expert panel on RBI’s economic capital framework has been formed to address the issue of RBI reserves—one of the sticking points between the central bank and the government.

The issue is that the government has been insisting that the central bank hand over its surplus reserves amid a shortfall in revenue collections. Access to the funds will allow the government to meet deficit targets, infuse capital into weak banks to boost lending and fund welfare programmes.

Terms of reference:

- The panel will decide whether RBI is holding provisions, reserves and buffers in surplus of the required levels.
- It would propose a suitable profits distribution policy taking into account all the likely situations of the RBI, including the situations of holding more provisions than required and the RBI holding less provisions than required.
- The ECF committee will also suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning that the RBI needs to maintain. That apart, any other related matter, including treatment of surplus reserves created out of realized gains, will also come within the ambit of this committee.

Economic capital framework: Economic capital framework refers to the risk capital required by the central bank while taking into account different risks. The economic capital framework reflects the capital that an institution requires or needs to hold as a counter against unforeseen risks or events or losses in the future.

Government reviews guidelines for FDI in e-commerce market

Government has reviewed guidelines for Foreign Direct Investment in E-commerce companies to protect the interests of domestic players. It has taken host of steps and barred e-commerce companies from selling products of the companies in which they have stake. In a statement, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said, it has also prohibited e-commerce companies from entering into an agreement for exclusive sale of products.

Cash back provided to buyers by group companies of marketplace entity shall be fair and non-discriminatory. The Ministry said, E-commerce entities providing marketplace will not directly or indirectly influence the sale price of goods or services and shall maintain level playing field. These decision will come into effect from 1st of February, 2019.

The decision comes in the backdrop of several complaints being flagged by domestic traders on heavy discounts being given by e-commerce players to consumers. Traders have welcomed the government's move to tighten norms for sale of products by e-commerce firms

ENVIRONMENT & GEOGRAPHY**Bahuda rookery**

The Odisha forest department is all set to add another olive ridley mass nesting site to its wildlife map- at Bahuda rookery. Around 3-km stretch of the beach from Sunapur to Anantpur at Bahuda rookery is being developed as a possible olive ridley mass nesting site.

Location: The Bahuda rookery is located around 20 km to the south of Rushikulya rookery coast, a major mass nesting site of olive ridleys on the Indian coastline.

Key facts:

- Also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, Olive turtles are a medium-sized species of sea turtle found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- They are best known for their behavior of synchronized nesting in mass numbers.
- The Convention on Migratory Species and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles have also provided olive ridleys with protection, leading to increased conservation and management for this marine turtle.
- It is included in vulnerable category by the IUCN Red list.

Mount Etna Erupts:

Italy's Mount Etna volcano has erupted again resulting in more than 130 earthquakes of up to 4.3 in magnitude.

Mt. Etna:

- Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe and one of the world's most frequently erupting volcanoes. It is also the volcano with the longest record of continuous eruption.
- Located near the east coast of the island of Sicily in Italy, Mount Etna is 10,900 feet tall.
- The mountain's largest feature is the Valle del Bove (Valley of the Ox), a large horseshoe-shaped caldera on the eastern slope.
- Etna sits on the active fault between the African plate and the Ionian microplate, which are both being subducted together beneath the Eurasian plate.
- In June 2013, it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Due to its history of recent activity and nearby population, Mount Etna has been designated a Decade Volcano by the United Nations.

MISCELLANEOUS**Tansen Samman**

Noted sitar player Manju Mehta has been conferred with the 'Tansen Samman' for 2018 by the Madhya Pradesh government for her contribution in the field of music.

Key facts:

- The prestigious 'National Tansen Samman' is a musical award conferred to the exponents of Hindustani music. This award carries a cash prize of Rs. 2 Lakh along with a memento.
- The Tansen Music Festival is organised every year by Madhya Pradesh culture department in the memory of Tansen, one of the greatest artists in Indian history. It is held annually in Gwalior.