

“Don't be pushed around by the fears in your mind. Be led by the dreams in your heart.”

Roy T. Bennett

NATIONAL

CABINET APPROVES RE-STRUCTURING OF NATIONAL NSDF AND NSDC

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for restructuring of National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to strengthen governance, implementation and monitoring framework.

The restructuring will also ensure better corporate governance, transparency and accountability in operations of NSDC besides strengthening the oversight role of NSDF. The approval would lead to restructuring of composition of Board of NSDF and the NSDC to strengthen governance, implementation and monitoring framework.

Background:

NSDC and NSDF were set up by the Ministry of Finance and registered in July, 2008 and January, 2009 respectively for implementing coordinated action for skill development. NSDF trust was incorporated to act as a receptacle for financial contributions from Governmental sources, bilateral/multilateral and other agencies. Its main objective is to enhance, stimulate and develop the skills of Indian youth force by various sector specific programmes.

NSDF entered into an Investment Management Agreement (IMA) with NSDC for utilization of its corpus to meet the desired objectives of National Skill Development Mission and encourage skill development in the country. Provision of supervisory role of NSDF over NSDC's functions is also included in the IMA between NSDC and NSDF.

CABINET APPROVES ENHANCING THE COVERAGE OF PRADHAN MANTRI ROJGAR PROTSAHAN YOJANA

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for enhancing the scope of Pradhan MantriRojgarProtsahanYojana (PMRPY).

The Government of India will now contribute the Employer's full admissible contribution for

the first three years from the date of registration of the new employee for all the sectors including existing beneficiaries for their remaining period of three years.

Benefits:

The informal sector workers would get social safety net and there would be more job creation.

Till now, the schemes has produced quite encouraging results and have added about 31 Lakhs beneficiaries to the formal employment involving an expenditure of more than Rs. 500 crore.

PMRPY:

PMRPY has been in operation since August, 2016. In this scheme, Government is paying the 8.33% contribution of Employers to the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) in respect of new employees (who have joined on or after 1st April 2016) having a new Universal Account Number (UAN), with salary up to Rs. 15,000/- per month.

The scheme has a dual benefit i.e. on the one hand the employers are incentivized for increasing the employment base of workers in the establishments, and on the other hand a large number of workers will find jobs in such establishments. A direct benefit is that these workers will have access to social security benefits of the organized sector.

CABINET APPROVES AMENDMENTS TO THE NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION (NMC) BILL

The Union Cabinet has approved certain official amendments to the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill.

The Amendment to the NMC Bill comes in the backdrop of its consideration in the Lok Sabha and subsequently being referred to the Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee (DRPSC).

The Government has considered the recommendations made by the Standing Committee in its report tabled in the House on 20.03.2018 and general feedback, particularly the views of medical students and

practitioners regarding certain provisions of the Bill.

Final MBBS Examination to be held as a common exam across the country and would serve as an exit test called the National Exit Test (NEXT):

The final MBBS examination would be held as a common exam throughout the country and would serve as an exit test to be called the National Exit Test (NEXT). Thus, the students would not have to appear in a separate exam after MBBS to get license to practice. NEXT would also serve as the screening test for doctors with foreign medical qualifications in order to practice in India.

Provision of Bridge course for AYUSH practitioners to practice modern medicine removed:

The provision dealing with bridge course for AYUSH practitioners to practice modern medicine to a limited extent has also been removed. It has been left to the State Governments to take necessary measures for addressing and promoting primary health care in rural areas.

Fee regulation for 50% seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities:

The maximum limit of 40% seats for which fee would be regulated in private medical institutions and deemed universities has been increased to 50% seats. Further, it has been clarified that the fee would also include all other charges taken by the colleges.

Number of nominees from States and UTs in NMC increased from 3 to 6:

Responding to the demands from States to increase their representation in the NMC, the nominees of States and UTs in the NMC have been increased from 3 to 6. The NMC will comprise of 25 members of which at least 21 will be doctors.

Monetary penalty for a medical college non-compliant with the norms replaced with provision for different penalty options

Stringent punishment for unqualified medical practitioners or quacks:

The punishment for any unauthorized practice of medicine has been made severe by including a provision for imprisonment of up to one year along with a fine extending up to Rs. 5 lakhs.

CABINET APPROVES MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND CANADA ON IPRS

The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post approval for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Canada.

The MoU was signed on 23rd February, 2018 to establish bilateral cooperation activities in the field of Intellectual Property (IP). The MoU is intended to promote innovation, creativity and economic growth in both countries.

The MoU establishes a broad and flexible framework through which both countries can exchange best practices and work together on training programs and technical exchanges to raise awareness on IPRs and better protect intellectual property rights (IPRs).

The priority initiatives under the MoU include:

- Exchange of best practices, experiences and knowledge on how to raise IP awareness among the public, businesses and educational institutions of both countries;
- Exchange of experts for interacting with the human resources engaged in specialized IP fields;
- Exchange and dissemination of best practices, experiences and knowledge on IP with industry, Universities, research and development organizations and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) through participation in programs, training, and events, organized singly or jointly by the participants;
- Cooperation in the development of automation and implementation of modernization projects, new and existing documentation and information systems in IP and procedures for management of IP;

- Cooperation to understand how traditional knowledge is protected; and the exchange of best practices, including traditional knowledge related data bases and awareness raising of existing IP systems;
- Collaboration in IP related training for local IP and business communities ;
- Any other cooperation activities they may mutually decide upon within the scope of this MoU.

WOMEN IN TECH 2018

RBS India in association with prominent technology corporates, Academia and government participation has setup an exclusive 'By Invite Only' platform 'Women In Tech' with the agenda of working towards encouraging more women to take up careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) as a key career choice.

WomenInTech:

WomenInTech has been conceived in association with a number of technology corporate, academia and NGOs.

The forum has been designed "to help accelerate the national agenda of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao and further to work in alignment with the UN's focus area this year – 'Turning promises into action'.

It would "address the need for policy making collectively as an industry to ensure that workplaces prod more girls to take up careers in STEM on one end and on the other hand are conducive for working women to aspire for senior level roles".

One of its initiatives is to build an independent corpus of funds, in collaboration with education NGOs, to sponsor the tertiary education of at least three young women to begin with from economically weak backgrounds in the field of engineering to top universities in the United States and United Kingdom.

According to the World Bank, women make up 40% of the world's workforce. Yet, the tech field is notoriously male-dominated at all levels and fares considerably worse than non-technology industries. Tech industry has merely 10 – 15% female workforce.

PERMANENT INDUS COMMISSION TO BE HELD TO RESOLUTE DIFFERENCES ON INDUS WATER TREATY

India and Pakistan will hold a meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission to discuss various issues under the Indus Waters Treaty.

This will be the 114th meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), which should meet at least once a year as per the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). The meeting of the PIC is held alternately in India and Pakistan every year.

The PIC had last met in March 2017 in Islamabad.

Indus Water Treaty:

The Indus Waters Treaty is a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan, brokered by the World Bank. The treaty was signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960 by Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru and President of Pakistan Ayub Khan.

According to this treaty, waters of the three western rivers (the Jhelum, the Chenab, and the Indus itself) were allocated to Pakistan, and those of the three eastern rivers (the Ravi, the Beas, and the Sutlej) were allocated to India.

The Treaty also provides arbitration mechanism to solve disputes amicably. Though Indus originates from Tibet, China has been kept out of the Treaty.

Permanent Indus Commission (PIC):

Permanent Indus Commission is a bilateral commission of officials from India-Pakistan, created to implement and manage goals of Indus Waters Treaty. Under the treaty, it is required that India and Pakistan meet every financial year. The Indus Commission is the first step for conflict resolution. If an agreement cannot be reached at the Commission level, the dispute is to be referred to the two governments. If the governments

too fail to reach an agreement, the Treaty provides an arbitration mechanism.

MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERED WITH THE MINISTRY OF POWER THROUGH SAUBHAGYA

Aiming to empower and uplift the rural youth and development, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship has partnered with the Ministry of Power to ensure access to electricity for every household in the country through an ambitious scheme, Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojna (SAUBHAGYA).

SAUBHAGYA Scheme:

Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – ‘Saubhagya’ was launched in September, 2017.

Under Saubhagya free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and poor families in urban areas will be provided.

Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) has been designated as nodal agency for the Saubhagya scheme.

The scheme aims to achieve universal household electrification in all parts of the country at a cost of Rs 16,320 crore, including Gross Budgetary Support of Rs 12,320 crore from the government.

All DISCOMs including Private Sector DISCOMs, State Power Departments and RE Cooperative Societies shall be eligible for financial assistance under the scheme in line with DDUGJY.

The prospective beneficiary households for free electricity connections under the scheme would be identified using SECC 2011 data. However, un-electrified households not covered under SECC data would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs. 500 which shall be recovered by DISCOMs in 10 instalments through electricity bill.

SCIENCE AND TECH

WHO RELEASED REPORT ON E- CIGARETTES

WHO has released a report on E- Cigarettes and its effects on health.

As per the report, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) (also known as e-cigarettes) emits nicotine, the addictive component of tobacco products. In addition to dependence, nicotine can have adverse effects on the development of the foetus during pregnancy and may contribute to cardiovascular disease.

The WHO report further says that although nicotine itself is not a carcinogen, it may function as a “tumour promoter” and seems to be involved in the biology of malignant disease, as well as of neurodegeneration.

Foetal and adolescent nicotine exposure may have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders.

The evidence is sufficient to warn children and adolescents, pregnant women, and women of reproductive age against ENDS use and nicotine.

An electronic cigarette (or e-cig) is a battery-powered vaporizer that mimics tobacco smoking. It works by heating up nicotine liquid, called “juice.”

Nicotine juice (or e-juice) comes in various flavors and nicotine levels. e-liquid is composed of five ingredients: vegetable glycerin (a material used in all types of food and personal care products, like toothpaste) and propylene glycol (a solvent most commonly used in fog machines.) propylene glycol is the ingredient that produces thicker clouds of vapor.

As e-cigarettes contain nicotine and not tobacco, they do not fall within the ambit of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA), which mandates stringent health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.
