

“Lack of direction, not lack of time, is the problem. We all have twenty-four hour days.”
Zig Ziglar

INTERNATIONAL
CABINET APPROVES MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND SACEP FOR CO-OPERATION ON THE RESPONSE TO OIL AND CHEMICAL POLLUTION IN THE SOUTH ASIAN SEAS REGION

The Union Cabinet has approved signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) for cooperation on the response to Oil and Chemical Pollution in the South Asian Seas Region.

Impact:

The MoU intends to promote closer cooperation between India and other maritime nations comprising the South Asian seas region namely Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for protection and preservation of marine environment in the region.

Implementation:

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) will be the Competent National Authority and national operational contact point for implementation of "Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan" under the MoU and shall respond to oil and chemical spills on behalf of Government of India. Further, ICG Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCCs) will be the national emergency response centre for marine incidents.

In order to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the environment in the South Asian region, the Governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka established the SACEP in 1982 in Sri Lanka. The SACEP jointly with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) developed a "Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan" to facilitate international co-operation and mutual assistance in preparing and responding to a major oil pollution incident in the seas around the Maritime States of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

NATIONAL
CABINET APPROVES FORMULATION OF A NEW INTEGRATED SCHEME FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal of Department of School Education and Literacy to formulate a Integrated Scheme on School Education by subsuming SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA), RashtriyaMadhyamikShikshaAbhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE) from 1st April, 2018 to 31st March, 2020.

An estimated allocation of Rs 75,000 crore over the period has been approved which is a 20% increase over the current allocations.

The scheme comes in the backdrop of PM's vision of SabkoShiksha, AchhiShiksha and aims to support the States in universalizing access to school education from classes pre-nursery to XII across the country.

Main Features of the Scheme:

The vision of the Scheme is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from nursery to senior secondary stage in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal for Education.

The main emphasis of the Integrated Scheme is on improving quality of school education by focusing on the two T's - Teacher and Technology.

The objectives of the Scheme are:

- Provision of quality education and enhancing learning outcomes of students;
- Bridging Social and Gender Gaps in School Education;
- Ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education;
- Ensuring minimum standards in schooling provisions;
- Promoting vocationalization of education;
- Support States in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009; and

- Strengthening and up-gradation of State Councils for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs)/State Institutes of Education and District Institutes for Education and Training (DIET) as nodal agencies for teacher training.

Impact:

The Scheme gives flexibility to the States and UTs to plan and prioritize their interventions within the scheme norms and the overall resource envelope available to them. It will help improve the transition rates across the various levels of school education and aid in promoting universal access to children to complete school education.

Benefits:

1. Holistic approach to education
2. Inclusion of senior secondary levels and pre-school levels in support for School education for the first time
3. An integrated administration looking at 'school' as a continuum
4. Focus on Quality of Education- Emphasis on improvement of Learning Outcomes
5. Enhanced Capacity Building of Teachers
6. Focus on strengthening Teacher Education Institutions like SCERTs and DIETs to improve the quality of teacher training
7. Enhanced use of digital technology in education through smart classrooms, digital boards and DTK channels
8. Specific provision for Swachhta activities - support 'SwachhVidyalaya'
9. Improve the Quality of Infrastructure in Government Schools
10. Enhanced Commitment to 'BetiBachaoBetiPadhao'- Up gradation of KGBVs from class VI -VIII to up to class XII
11. Emphasis on 'KaushalVikas' in schools
12. Support 'Khelo India' - provision for sports and physical equipment

13. Preference to Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs), LWEs, Special Focus Districts (SFDs), Border areas and the 115 aspirational districts

SEBI TIGHTENS RULES ON CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The SEBI has tightened the corporate governance norms for listed companies by accepting most of the recommendations of the Kotak Committee.

The SEBI has decided to reduce the maximum number of directorships to seven from 10 in a phased manner while expanding the eligibility criteria for directors.

The regulator has also enhanced the roles of the audit committee along with those of the nomination and remuneration committee and the risk management committee at companies.

Further, the new norms relating to the number of independent directors, appointment of at least one independent woman director and time limit for holding annual general meetings would be rolled out in a phased manner.

Other important measures taken by the SEBI

Among other things, SEBI amended the enforcement framework for non-compliance of the listing regulations.

This would allow exchanges to freeze the shareholding of the promoter and promoter group for non-compliance.

SEBI also decided to initiate a public consultation process for a framework for listed companies that are in the midst of insolvency resolution process.

Corporate governance

Corporate governance is the system of rules, practices and processes by which a company is directed and controlled. Corporate governance essentially involves balancing the interests of a company's many stakeholders, such as shareholders, management, customers, suppliers, financiers, government and the community.

INDIA SIGNS THE HOST COUNTRY AGREEMENT WITH THE ISA

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) have signed the Host Country Agreement.

The Agreement will give ISA a juridical personality and gives it power to contract, to acquire and dispose off movable and immovable properties, to institute and defend legal proceedings.

Under this agreement, ISA shall enjoy such privileges, applicable tax concessions and immunities as are necessary for ISA's Headquarter to independently discharge its function and programmes.

Background:

The main objective of ISA is to undertake joint efforts required to reduce the cost of finance and the cost of technology for massive deployment of solar energy and pave the way for future technologies adapted to the needs of 121 countries lying fully or partially between the Tropics.

ISA has presently four ongoing programmes: Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use, Affordable Finance at Scale, Scaling Solar Mini Grids and Scaling Solar Rooftop catering to the needs of solar energy in specific areas.

The ISA is the first international intergovernmental treaty based organization to be headquartered in India.

GOVERNMENT HAS EXTENDED THE DEADLINE FOR LINKING AADHAAR TO AVAIL OF VARIOUS SERVICES

The government has extended the deadline for linking Aadhaar to avail of various services, subsidies and benefits under section 7 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016. The deadline is extended by three months to 30 June.

Subsidies for cooking gas and kerosene, and even scholarships are transferred to citizens from the Consolidated Fund of India under section 7 of the Aadhaar Act

According to an order issued by the policymaking body of the tax department, the deadline for PAN-Aadhaar linking for filing

income-tax (I-T) returns is being extended after "consideration of the matter"

The government has now made quoting Aadhaar mandatory for filing I-T returns as well as obtaining a new PAN

The deadline for linking bank accounts and mobile phone numbers with the 12-digit biometric identifier Aadhaar has already been extended indefinitely, till the five-judge Constitution bench delivers its judgement on petitions challenging the validity of the biometric scheme and the enabling law

'E-TRIBES: TRIBES INDIA' INITIATIVE

The government has recently launched 'e-Tribes: Tribes India', an initiative for digital commerce at Tribes India outlet at Mahadev Road.

It included launch of e-commerce portal of TRIFED, www.tribesindia.com and M-commerce, android app 'Tribes India'.

The Tribes India banner was launched on Snapdeal, Amazon, Paytm and GeM for the marketing of tribal products through these e-commerce portals.

With this, more than 55,000 tribal artisans connected to TRIFED will get access to local as well as international markets.

TRIBES India organization has set up an ambitious retail sales target of Rs 100 crores to be achieved during 2018-19 with the help of e-commerce.

INDIA CONVENTION PROMOTION BUREAU

The government of India has been providing necessary support to India Convention Promotion Bureau to promote India as a venue for International Conferences and Exhibitions.

ICPB:

The India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) has been set up under the patronage of the Ministry of Tourism.

It has been set up to promote India as a venue for International Conferences and Exhibitions.

It is a non-profit organization, with members comprising national airlines, hotels, travel agents, tour operators, tourist transport operators, conference organizers, etc.

It participates in International Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) Tourism trade fairs like IMEX in Frankfurt and Las Vegas, EIBTM- Barcelona and AIME- Melbourne along with the India tourism overseas offices.

SCIENCE & TECH

NATIONAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE MISSION (N-AIM)

A central task force on Artificial Intelligence (AI) has suggested creating a National Artificial Intelligence Mission (N-AIM).

It will serve as a nodal agency for coordinating AI related activities in the country.

Artificial Intelligence is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programmes.

The mission shall involve itself in core activities, coordination of AI-related projects of national importance and establish Centers of Excellence.

The core activities include funding establishment of a network among Academia, services industry, product industry, startups and Government ministries, besides helping studies to identify concrete projects in each domain of focus.

NASA HAS DELAYED THE LAUNCH OF JAMES WEBB SPACE TELESCOPE

NASA has delayed the launch of its much awaited, \$8 billion James Webb Space Telescope — set to be the world's biggest space observatory — until at least May 2020.

The James Webb Space Telescope, also called Webb or JWST, is a large, space-based observatory, optimized for infrared wavelengths, which will complement and extend the discoveries of the Hubble Space Telescope.

It will cover longer wavelengths of light than Hubble and will have greatly improved

sensitivity. The longer wavelengths enable JWST to look further back in time to see the first galaxies that formed in the early universe, and to peer inside dust clouds where stars and planetary systems are forming today.

It is developed in collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency. and will be located near the Earth-Sun L2 Lagrangian point. The telescope will offer unprecedented resolution and sensitivity from the long-wavelength (orange to red) visible light through the mid-infrared (0.6 to 27 μm) range.

JWST's capabilities will enable a broad range of investigations across the fields of astronomy and cosmology. One particular goal involves observing some of the most distant events and objects in the universe, such as the formation of the first galaxies. These types of targets are beyond the reach of current ground and space-based instruments. Some other goals include understanding the formation of stars and planets, and direct imaging of exoplanets and novae.

By viewing the universe at infrared wavelengths Webb will show us things never before seen by any other telescope. It is only at infrared wavelengths that we can see the first stars and galaxies forming after the Big Bang. And it is with infrared light that we can see stars and planetary systems forming inside clouds of dust that are opaque to visible light.

This space-based observatory is named after James E. Webb (1906- 1992), NASA's second administrator. Webb is best known for leading Apollo, a series of lunar exploration programs that landed the first humans on the Moon.
