

“Everything is hard before it is easy” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**NATIONAL****PM REVIEWS PROGRESS TOWARDS HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF ISLANDS**

NITI Aayog made a presentation on the elements of holistic development, including key infrastructure projects, **digital connectivity, green energy, desalination plants, waste management, promotion of fisheries, and tourism-based projects.**

PM asked for exploring the possibility of seaweed cultivation, and other initiatives which could be of help for the agriculture sector.

Reviewing the work done in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, PM emphasized on the need for developing an integrated tourism-centric ecosystem, in the areas identified for tourism development.

He called for expeditious pursuit of energy self-sufficiency in the islands, which could be based on solar energy.

Ministry of Home Affairs dispenses the requirement of Restricted Area Permit for foreigners visiting the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Greater connectivity of these islands with South East Asia was also discussed.

During the review of development work in Lakshadweep, the PM was apprised of the steps taken to boost Tuna fishing and the promotion of “Lakshadweep Tuna” as a brand.

Island Development Agency:

IDA was set up in **June 2017** following Prime Minister’s review meeting for the holistic development of islands.

The meetings of the agency **are chaired by the Union Home Minister.**

Members of IDA include **cabinet secretary, the home secretary, secretary (environment, forests and climate change), secretary (tourism) and secretary (tribal welfare).**

NITI AAYOG PARTNERS WITH GNFC TO IMPLEMENT DISBURSEMENT OF SUBSIDY THROUGH BLOCKCHAIN TECH

NITI Aayog partners with GNFC Ltd to implement Fertilizer Subsidy Disbursement through Blockchain Technology.

NITI Aayog and Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers & Chemicals Limited (GNFC) have signed a Statement of Intent (SOI) today to work towards implementing a Proof-of-Concept (“PoC”) application using Block chain Technology for fertilizer subsidy management.

They will jointly develop the use case, undertake research, interact with multiple stakeholders, develop Block chain solutions, exchange learnings, organize forums, and disseminate learnings across their networks.

This will enable NITI Aayog to suggest policy recommendations and actions in strengthening the subsidy mechanism, making it more transparent and immune to leakages.

Fertilizer units manufacture approximately 31 Million MT of fertilizers across country, where total approximately Rs. 70,000 Cr. of subsidy is disbursed to the manufacturing units.

The subsidy disbursal takes two to three months’ time.

There are multiple entities involved in the verification process, and the transaction process is very cumbersome which has the potential to be automated to give significant efficiency gains.

Block chain platform has inherent characteristics of distributed computing and ledger keeping of transactions i.e. confidentiality, authenticity, non-repudiation, data integrity, and data availability.

Overall implementation ensures that there is no dependence on intermediary agencies to prove the validity of transactions and resulting subsidy claims.

The block chain based process will also use Smart Contracts which will enable quick and accurate reconciliation of transactions between multiple parties with minimal human intervention.

Implementation platform is such that process transparency is evident, transactions cannot be altered and audit trails of transactions are available.

NATIONAL GENERIC DOCUMENT REGISTRATION SYSTEM ADOPTED IN PUNJAB AND A&N ISLANDS

The Union Minister for **Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Mines** has inaugurated NGDRS in all sub-registrar offices in Andaman & Nicobar Islands from New Delhi through a Video-Conferencing.

To aptly address the diversity and variations prevailing across the States on account of languages, processes, formulae and formats the NGDRS has been formed.

National Generic Document Registration System:

State-wide inauguration of the NGDRS was done by the State Government on 27th June 2018 with the technical assistance and collaboration of NIC including its software development unit at NIC Pune.

This generic customizable software, when universally adopted in the Country, will enable 'anywhere access' to data and information to both the common man and the enforcement and regulatory agencies.

Transparency will be promoted due to registration through digital means and people will get the benefits in a hassle-free manner.

The NGDRS system has been piloted in 3 States (Punjab, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra). 6 more states and UTs (Goa, A&N Islands, Bihar, Jharkhand, Manipur, and Mizoram) are moving towards this system.

The Department is presently focusing on implementation of NGDRS in these 14 States, to optimally use the available funds in a cost-effective, productive and time-bound manner.

Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP):

The DILRMP aims to digitize the maps, integrate the textual and spatial data, carry out the surveys to update the records by using latest available techniques including GIS mapping.

More emphasis is being given to verification and establishing conclusive ownership including use of Biometric identification using Aadhaar and use of block chain technology.

With its priority to updated and error-free land records and easy access to information thereto, Government of India made the DILRMP into a cent per cent centrally-funded central sector scheme from 01st April 2016.

'IPLLEDGEFOR9' ACHIEVERS AWARDS FOR DOCTORS FOR EXEMPLARY SERVICES IN PMSMA'S OBJECTIVES

'IPLledgefor9' Achievers Awards were given recently to the individuals and teams of doctors from the private sector and States for their exemplary services, outstanding support of institutions and commitment from support partners in achieving PMSMA's objectives of safe motherhood to every woman in the country.

'IPLledgeFor9' Achievers Awards have been devised to celebrate individual and team achievements and acknowledge voluntary contributions for PMSMA in states and districts across India.

PMSMA:

The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan has been launched by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India.

The program aims to provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th of every month.

PMSMA guarantees a minimum package of antenatal care services to women in their 2nd/3rd trimesters of pregnancy at designated government health facilities.

The programme follows a systematic approach for engagement with private sector which includes motivating private practitioners to volunteer for the campaign; developing strategies for generating awareness and appealing to the private sector to participate in the Abhiyan at government health facilities.

Different colour stickers will be Red Sticker for Serious patients, Blue Sticker for High blood

pressure and Yellow Sticker for Other diseases.

Data indicates that Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India was very high in the year 1990 with 556 women dying during child birth per hundred thousand live births as compared to the global MMR of 385/lakh live births. As per RGI- SRS (2011-13), MMR of India has now declined to 167/lakh live births against a global MMR of 216/lakh live births (2015). India has registered an overall decline in MMR of 70% between 1990 and 2015 in comparison to a global decline of 44%.

While India has made considerable progress in the reduction of maternal and infant mortality, every year approximately 44000 women still die due to pregnancy-related causes and approximately 6.6 lakh infants die within the first 28 days of life. Many of these deaths are preventable and many lives can be saved if quality care is provided to pregnant women during their antenatal period and high risk factors such as severe anemia, pregnancy-induced hypertension etc are detected on time and managed well.

WITH A RANGE OF 5,000 KM, AGNI-V WILL ACT AS A DETERRENT

India's longest-range ballistic missile, Agni-V, will be inducted into the nuclear arsenal very soon, according to official sources.

The Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) with a range of over 5,000 km can reach most parts of China. It is a strategic asset which will act as a deterrent.

The missile features the latest technologies for navigation and improved accuracy. Earlier variants of the Agni family of long-range missiles have already been deployed.

Last month, the canisterised variant of the missile was successfully test-fired by the user, the Strategic Forces Command (SFC). A few more user trials are planned in the next few weeks.

The Agni series of missiles constitute the backbone of India's nuclear weapons delivery, which also includes the Prithvi short-range ballistic missiles and fighter aircraft. The

submarine-based nuclear arsenal, which assures second strike capability in the face of the proclaimed no-first-use policy, is taking shape.

While one nuclear ballistic missile has been inducted, more submarines and longer range submarine-launched ballistic missiles are under various stages of development.

DREAM OF BEING AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POWERHOUSE

In a recent discussion paper, NITI Aayog has chalked out an ambitious strategy for India to become an artificial intelligence (AI) powerhouse.

AI is the use of computers to make decisions that are normally made by humans. Many forms of AI surround Indians already, including chatbots on retail websites and programs that flag fraudulent bank activity. But NITI Aayog envisions AI solutions for India on a scale not seen anywhere in the world today, especially in five key sectors — agriculture, healthcare, education, smart cities and infrastructure, and transport.

However, there are formidable obstacles. AI start-ups already offer some solutions, but the challenge lies in scaling these to cover the entire value chain, as NITI Aayog envisions. The first problem is data. Machine learning, the set of technologies used to create AI, is a data-guzzling monster. Unfortunately, India has sparse data in sectors like agriculture, and this is already hampering AI-based businesses today.

Another problem for AI firms today is finding the right people. NITI Aayog's report has bleak news: only about 50 Indian scientists carry out "serious research" and they are concentrated in elite institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Science. Meanwhile, only about 4% of AI professionals have worked in emerging technologies like deep learning.

Can India then really become an "AI garage" for 40% of the world, as NITI Aayog envisions? First, if the government is serious about AI solutions powering agriculture or healthcare,

it must collect and digitise data better under its existing programs.

Second, to close the skill gap, NITI Aayog suggests setting up a network of basic and applied AI research institutes. But if these institutes are to fulfil their mandate, they must collaborate closely with agricultural universities, medical colleges and infrastructure planners.

AI is a collaborative process in which scientists developing solutions for certain sectors need an intimate knowledge of those sectors. The NITI Aayog report talks about collaboration. But unless collaboration is the basis for the new crop of institutes, these institutes won't make a difference, experts say.

Third, NITI Aayog's ambitious road map does not mention deadlines or funding. Without these, it lacks accountability. The government must make haste and specify its commitments on these fronts.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA CELEBRATED THE 1ST GST DAY

Indirect Tax collections increase by 11.9%; 1.5% increase expected in the Non oil category, post GST roll out.

Addressing the gathering Shri Arun Jaitley recalled the pre-GST taxation system in India was one of the most complicated tax systems in the world. Multiple taxes, multiple returns to be filed by assesees, interface with multiple tax authorities, cascading effect of taxes, rising inflation, no free flow of goods across the country, fragmented markets across the country, inter alia, were some of the tenuous issues plaguing the indirect taxation system in India. GST has persuaded people to do businesses in a transparent manner without evading taxes.

Listing out the remarkable successes that the GST has achieved in a short span of 1 year, Shri Jaitley said that this reform has created a unified market, the cascading of taxes has been eliminated, the weighted average of total taxation basket has come down, the GST Council is working upon continuous rationalization of tax slabs, advance direct tax payments increased as result of successful

implementation of GST, among others. The Minister informed that the total indirect tax collection for 9 month period in previous financial year post implementation of GST is about Rs. 8.2 lakh crores, which if extrapolated for the whole year comes to about Rs. 11 lakh crores, an 11.9% increase in indirect tax collections.

Talking about the capacity to rationalise present GST slabs, Shri Jaitley said that the GST Council is constantly working in that direction and the desired rationalization will come with the setting in of the stability of GST system, increasing tax collections through curbing tax evasion and increasing the tax net. The Minister said that according to his projection, an increase of 1.5% in indirect tax collections is expected in the Non oil category, which will facilitate the automatic rationalisation of tax slabs in near future.

GST is a landmark reform that has transformed the Nation into an economic union with the motto 'ONE NATION, ONE TAX, ONE MARKET'. No other Nation in the world, so huge, with so many regional socio-economic and political interests has been able to implement such a tax reform ever in history.

This reform has put an end to the illegal activities like tax evasion by simplifying the tax administration and bringing a transformation in the culture among trade and industry in the country towards faithful payment of indirect taxes.

Speaking on reduction of tax slabs under GST, Shri Goyal clarified that the different tax slabs have been decided after due deliberations in the GST Council, keeping in mind the socio-economic make up of this country. The Minister encouraged citizens of the country to help the Government to eliminate the culture of tax evasion and contribute whole heartedly in the success of GST and development of this country.
