

NATIONAL**PRASAD Scheme: Centre includes Gangotri, Yamunotri in Uttarakhand, Amarkantak in MP and Parasnath in Jharkhand**

Union Government has included Gangotri and Yamunotri in Uttarakhand, Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh and Parasnath in Jharkhand under Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) to develop pilgrimage and heritage destinations in the country. With the new additions, the number of sites under PRASAD has now reached to 41 in 25 states.

PRASAD Scheme: It was launched in 2014-15 by Union Ministry of Tourism. It aims at integrated development of pilgrimage destinations in planned, prioritised and sustainable manner to provide complete religious tourism experience. It focuses on the development and beautification of the identified pilgrimage destinations.

Objectives:

- Harness pilgrimage tourism for its direct and multiplier effect upon employment generation and economic development. Enhance tourist attractiveness in sustainable manner by developing world class infrastructure in the religious destinations.
- It also seeks to promote local art, culture, handicraft, cuisine, etc.
- Infrastructure development under this scheme includes Development of entry points (road, rail and water transport),
- Last mile connectivity, basic tourism facilities like Information/interpretation centers, ATM/ money exchange.
- Development of eco-friendly modes of transport, lighting and illumination with renewable energy sources, drinking water, parking, toilets, waiting rooms, first aid centers, craft bazars/haats/souvenir shops/cafeteria, rain shelters, telecom facilities, internet connectivity etc.

GI Tag to Kandhmaal Haldi

Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi (turmeric), famous for its healing properties, is all set to receive GI tag.

GI tag: A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory. Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin under WTO provision.

Dual-Fuel Usage for Agricultural and Construction Equipment Vehicles

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has notified dual-fuel usage for agricultural and construction equipment vehicles.

Objective:

- It will give a boost to vehicles run on bio-fuel, and help in reducing both cost and pollution.
- List of Dual-Fuel Vehicles (diesel as primary and CNG, Bio CNG as secondary):
- Tractors, power tillers, construction equipment vehicles and combine harvesters which have originally been manufactured as dual-fuel or have been converted as such from in-use diesel vehicles.

Rajiv Kumar Committee:

The Union Government has constituted a six-member committee to look at selling of 149 small and marginal oil and gas fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) to private and foreign companies to boost domestic output. The panel is chaired by the NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar.

INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL

Patents granted by India up by 50% in 2017: WIPO

According to World Intellectual Property Indicators 2018 report released by United Nation's World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), number of patents granted by India shot up by 50% in 2017. The patents granted by India increased from 8,248 in 2016 to 12,387 in 2017, thus keeping up trend of steep increases.

Patents granted in 2017 in India were more than double 6,022 patents granted in 2015. Of the patents granted in 2017, 1,712 went to entities and individuals based in India, and 10,675 to foreigners. The steep increase in number was driven by patents granted to foreigners, which accounted for 85% of total increase.

The number of patents given to domestic entities also has shown increasing trend. In 2016, 1,115 went to domestic individuals or entities and 7,133 to foreigners and in 2015, 822 were granted to applicants in India and 5,200 to foreigners. Globally, 1.4 million patents were granted in 2017. China led world with 4,20,144 granted patents and was followed by US with 3,18,829.

World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO): It is the global body for promotion and protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). It is one of the 15 specialized agencies of United Nations (UN). It was established in 1967 and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. Its mandate is to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world. It encourages and provides assistance to all its 188 member countries in formulating national IPR policy however it does not dictate or prescribe any mandatory measures. India is a member of WIPO and party to several treaties administered by WIPO.

India – UAE sign currency swap deal worth Rs.3500cr.

India and the United Arab Emirates signed a currency swap agreement to boost investment and enable direct trade without using dollars or other international currencies. The swap is for 200 crore dirhams or Rs. 3,500 crore (\$496 million), depending on which central bank requests the amount, an official statement said.

"The bilateral currency swap agreement between India and the UAE is expected to reduce the dependency on hard currencies like the U.S dollar," the statement said, adding that the two central banks had agreed the deal.

The agreement was signed after the 12th India-UAE joint commission meeting co-chaired by External Affairs Minister SushmaSwaraj and the UAE's Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdulla bin Zayed al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi.

Bilateral trade between the two countries stood at around \$52 billion in 2017, according to figures from the Indian embassy in the UAE. In 2015, China's central bank extended a currency swap agreement with the UAE Central bank worth \$5.54 billion.

Swaraj and Abdullah also jointly inaugurated a digital interactive museum showcasing the life, works and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and the founder of modern UAE ShaikhZayed.

The Gandhi-Zayed Digital Museum, which will promote peace, tolerance and sustainability, is part of the celebrations by the two countries to mark 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and centenary celebrations of the birth of Shaikh Zayed.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

India's heaviest and most advanced satellite GSAT-11 was recently launched from the Guiana Space Centre at Kourou in French Guiana.

GSAT-11 :

- GSAT-11 is ISRO's heaviest satellite ever built and weighs about 5854 kilograms.
- It was launched onboard Ariane-5 launch vehicle from French Guiana.
- ISRO has revealed that the satellite will be initially placed in the Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit and will be later raised to Geostationary Orbit. It will be using the Liquid Apogee Motor which will be onboard the satellite.
- GSAT-11 is part of ISRO's new family of high-throughput communication satellite (HTS) fleet that will drive the country's Internet broadband from space to untouched areas.
- According to ISRO, GSAT-11's multiple spot beam coverage — 32 in Ku band and eight in Ka bands — will deliver an improved service of 16 gbps over the Indian region and nearby islands.
- The satellite will also have VSAT Terminals which basically will ensure that it can handle large capacity platform to support a huge subscriber base.

Importance of GSAT 11 :

- GSAT-11 will bring far greater speeds (16 Gbps of it, no less) and capacity to meet growing demand for mobile and internet in households, businesses, and public organisations.
- Large parts of rural areas still remain untouched by the scope of commercial telecom today — something GSAT-11 is designed to change. Under Digital India's BharatNet project GSAT-11 will boost access to voice and video streaming in most, if not all, of rural India.
- With India moving fast towards implementing 'Smart Villages and Cities', they can be efficiently linked through a large communication satellite.

ExseedSAT 1, India's 1st private satellite

With the launch of ExseedSAT 1, Exseed Space has become the first Indian privately-funded startup to successfully send a satellite into space. ExseedSAT 1 was launched into space by Space X along with 63 other satellites from 17 countries.

ExseedSAT 1 and its applications:

- The mini communication satellite weighing just a kg with double the size of a Rubik's cube (10 cm x 10 cm x 10 cm) is made up of aluminium alloy.
- The satellite looks to serve the amateur radio community.
- The satellite with a lifespan of five years will allow people to receive signals on 145.9 Mhz frequency with the help of a TV tuner.
- The satellite would provide a big boost to private radio operators and help in coordinating messages among them and help the country in time of disaster.