

NATIONAL**Integrated Government Online Training Programme (iGOT)**

The iGOT (Integrated Government Online Training Programme) developed by Department of Personnel and Training, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, was launched.

IGOT Programme

Aim:

- To provide a broad training eco-system creating synergies across various premier training institutes of the country and to cater the training needs which can encompass all the officials in the entire hierarchy of Central and State Governments.
- The IGOT will augment the existing training mechanism with online module-based training coupled with certification on flexitime basis.
- The training will be focussed and targeted to the requirement of the officials.

What is included in IGOT Programme?

- The e-Learning mode provides unparalleled opportunities for training to a large number of civil servants scattered all over the country.
- The latest technologies make available vast resources of learning material and online courses, providing the individuals enormous choices and flexibility in learning.
- It will provide a single point of access to the repository of training resources.
- The training courses under this programme will be accessible through DoPT's web portal.
- The initiative aims at "Competent Civil Services for Good Governance".

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has issued safety guidelines for Isotretinoin. CDSCO has directed Drug Controllers of all the States and Union Territories to monitor the sale, manufacture and distribution of Isotretinoin.

Isotretinoin: Isotretinoin is an oral drug, which is used in the treatment of severe acne. Isotretinoin capsules of 10 mg/20 mg were approved by CDSCO in 2002 for the treatment of cystic and conglobate acne, and severe nodular acne unresponsive to antibiotic therapy. It was later found that Isotretinoin can cause birth defects in progeny if not taken without proper guidance.

CDSCO: The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.

Functions: Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO is responsible for approval of New Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view to bring about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

CDSCO along with state regulators, is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

MHA authorises 10 central agencies to access any computer resource

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued an order authorising ten security and intelligence agencies of the country to access any information stored in any computer for the purpose of monitoring, decrypting and interception. These agencies are Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Bureau of Investigation, National Investigation Agency, Cabinet Secretariat (RAW), Directorate of Signal Intelligence (For service areas of Jammu & Kashmir, North-East and Assam only), and Commissioner of Police, Delhi.

Highlights of the Order:

- The ministry has vested the authority on the agencies under Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and Rule 4 of the Information Technology Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009.
- The order mandates for a subscriber or service provider or any person in charge of the computer resource to extend technical assistance to the agencies.
- Non-compliance will invite seven-year imprisonment and fine.

Concerns raised:

Only data in motion could be intercepted earlier. But now data revived, stored and generated can also be intercepted as powers of seizure have been given. This means not just calls or emails, but any data found on a computer can be intercepted. The agencies will also have powers to seize the devices. The sweeping powers given to agencies to snoop phone calls and computers without any checks and balances is extremely worrisome. This is likely to be misused.

States' Startup Ranking 2018

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) announced results of the first ever States' Start-up Ranking 2018.

States' Start-up Ranking

- The DIPP launched an exercise to rank states and union territories on the basis of measures being taken by them to promote startups, and added that it was consulting states for their ranking framework.
- DIPP began this exercise from January, 2016.
- The State Startup Ranking Framework is aimed at bringing to fore progress made by States/UTs for promoting startup ecosystem.
- The report intends to foster competitiveness and propel the states/UTs to work proactively while facilitating states/UTs to identify, learn and replicate good practices.

Performance of the States

Best Performer: Gujarat

Top Performers :Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan

Leaders: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana

Aspiring Leaders : Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal

Emerging States: Assam, Delhi, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand

Beginners: Chandigarh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, and Tripura

RTI Portal on Judgments/Orders of Supreme Court, High Courts and CIC

- The RTI Portal on Judgments/Orders of Supreme Court, High Courts and CIC has been developed by Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM), New Delhi.
- This Portal will provide a learning environment for all stakeholders under which a repository on the landmark cases on the RTI will be available at one place.
- The Portal also makes available the gist of the replies given by Central Public Information Officers (CPIOs), First Appellate Authorities as well as the Supreme Court.
- It will be helpful in learning the latest trends of implementation of RTI Act as the judgments/orders given by Central Information Commission, High Courts and Supreme Court are always a crucial source to track the developments on this subject.

ECONOMY**Govt seeks Rs. 41,000 crore more for bank recapitalisation**

The government has sought Parliament's approval for supplementary grants worth ₹41,000 crore to infuse fresh capital into ailing state-run banks in the current fiscal.

Implications:

The additional capital could help as many as five such state-run banks exit the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework that mandates them to pare lending to companies and cut concentration of loans to certain sectors. Eleven banks were put under the PCA framework by the Reserve Bank of India between February 2014 and January 2018.

The government had budgeted Rs. 65,000 crore for infusion into public sector banks (PSBs) through recapitalization bonds this fiscal, of which Rs. 2,000 crore is still to be allotted. With the additional Rs. 41,000 crore of capital infusion by 31 March, the government will be infusing a total Rs. 83,000 crore into public sector banks this year.

The capital infusion will be utilized to ensure that the better-performing banks under the PCA framework meet their regulatory capital norms and non-PCA banks do not breach the threshold.

Concerns associated with recapitalization of banks:

- The government as the major owner is free to recapitalise but the issue is, at what cost, for how long, and whether recapitalisation alone is enough.
- The government is finding it increasingly difficult to recapitalize public sector banks due to the compulsion to adhere to the stringent budgetary deficit benchmarks.
- Bankers become lackadaisical toward debt recovery and tend to escalate provisions and contingencies to be adjusted against the fresh capital.
- In different-banks-same-pay situations, employees in the loss-making, but recapitalized, banks become unenthusiastic while those in profit-making, but not recapitalized are demotivated.
- It also implies cross-subsidization: dividend-paying PSU banks subsidizing the non-dividend paying. Ultimately, systemic efficiency suffers.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)**

French IT services firm Atos has won a three-year contract to build the first phase of supercomputers under India's Rs 4,500-crore National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).

National Supercomputing Mission (NSM):

- The Mission envisages empowering national academic and R&D institutions spread over the country by installing a vast supercomputing grid comprising of more than 70 high-performance computing facilities.
- These supercomputers will also be networked on the National Supercomputing grid over the National Knowledge Network (NKN).
- The NKN is another programme of the government which connects academic institutions and R&D labs over a high speed network.
- The Mission includes development of highly professional High Performance Computing (HPC) aware human resource for meeting challenges of development of these applications.
- India looks forward to create a cluster of machines for weather forecasting, drug discovery and data mining.

Agencies involved:

- The Mission would be implemented and steered jointly by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) over a period of seven years.
- The tender to build these high performance computers (HPC) had been floated by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
- Atos would be deploying its energy efficient Direct Liquid Cooled Bull Sequana supercomputers in India.

ENVIRONMENT & GEOGRAPHY**NASA Confirms Saturns Rings Will Be Gone in 100 Million Years**

New NASA research confirms that Saturn is losing its iconic rings at the maximum rate estimated from Voyager 1 & 2 observations made decades ago. The rings are being pulled into Saturn by gravity as a dusty rain of ice particles under the influence of Saturn's magnetic field.

Composition and structure:

- Saturn's rings are made up of billions of particles ranging from grains of sand to mountain-size chunks. Composed predominantly of water-ice, the rings also draw in rocky meteoroids as they travel through space.
- Though Saturn appears surrounded by a single, solid ring when viewed by an amateur astronomer, several divisions exist. The rings are named alphabetically in the order of discovery. Thus the main rings are, from farthest from the planet to closest, A, B and C. A gap 2,920 miles wide (4,700 kilometers), known as the Cassini Division, separates the A and B rings.
- The rings themselves contain a number of gaps and structures. Some are created by Saturn's many small moons, while others continue to puzzle to astronomers.

Planets with rings: Saturn is not the only planet in the solar system to have rings — Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune also contain faint ring systems — but with its satellites spanning three-quarters of the Earth-moon distance (175,000 miles or 282,000 km), it is by far the largest and most visible.

Asiatic Lion Conservation Project

The MoEFCC has launched the "Asiatic Lion Conservation Project" with an aim to protect and conserve the world's last ranging free population of Asiatic Lion and its associated ecosystem. The project will be funded from the Centrally Sponsored Scheme- Development of Wildlife Habitat (CSS-DWH) with the contributing ratio being 60:40 of Central and State share. The conservation of Asiatic Lions has always been a priority of Government of India. The Ministry in the past has supported Asiatic Lion in Gujarat by including it in list of 21 critically endangered species under the species recovery component of CSS-DWH.

Objectives of the project

- The project activities is envisaged in a manner to cause habitat improvement, scientific interventions, disease control and veterinary care supplemented with adequate eco development works for the fringe population in order to ensure a stable and viable Lion population in the Country.
- The project will strengthen the ongoing measures for conservation and recovery of Asiatic Lion with the help of state-of-the-art techniques/ instruments, regular scientific research studies, disease management, Modern surveillance/ patrolling techniques.

Asiatic Lions conservation in India

- Asiatic lions that once ranged from Persia (Iran) to Palamau in Eastern India were almost driven to extinction by indiscriminate hunting and habitat loss.
- A single population of less than 50 lions persisted in the Gir forests of Gujarat by late 1890's.
- IUCN Red List Status: Endangered
- With timely and stringent protection offered by the State Government and the Center Government, Asiatic lions have increased to the current population of over 500 numbers.
- The last census in the year 2015 showed the population of 523 Asiatic Lions in Gir Protected Area Network of 1648.79 sq. km. that includes Gir National Park, Gir Sanctuary, Pania Sanctuary, Mitiyala Sanctuary adjoining reserved forests, Protected Forests, and Unclassed Forests.