

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC****NHAI TO RANK ROADS FOR QUALITY SERVICE**

In its effort to improve the quality of roads, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has decided to undertake performance assessment and ranking of the highways in the country.

**About:**

- The criteria for the assessment have been broadly categorised in three main heads: Highway Efficiency (45%), Highway Safety (35%) and User Services (20%).
- The score obtained by each Corridor in each of the parameter will provide a feedback and corrective recourse for higher standards of operation, better safety and user experience to improve existing highways.
- This will also help in identifying and filling gaps of design, standards, practices, guidelines and contract agreements for other NHAI projects.

**DRAFT SCHEME FOR CASHLESS TREATMENT OF MOTOR ACCIDENT VICTIMS**

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has prepared a concept note for implementing the scheme of cashless treatment of motor accident victims, as contemplated under the MV Act 2019. The Ministry has asked the States and Union Territories to share their views on it.

**About:**

- It has been envisaged in the scheme to provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in the country.
- The scheme also includes creation of a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund.
- The fund would be utilized for treatment of road accident victims and for payment of compensation to the injured or to the family of person losing life in hit and run cases. This includes treatment of victims during the crucial Golden hour.
- The National Health Authority, being the nodal agency for PM-JAY has been entrusted to implement the scheme.

**GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.****Ujjwala Scheme**

Union Cabinet has approved the extension of time limit by three months w.e.f. 01.07.2020 for availing the benefits of "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana" for Ujjwala beneficiaries.

**About:**

- The Government had announced a relief package " Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana" which also included relief for poor families who had availed of an LPG connection under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).
- Under the PMGKY-Ujjwala, it was decided to provide free of cost refills for PMUY consumers for a period of 3 months w.e.f. 01.04.2020.
- Under the Scheme, Rs. 9709.86 Cr was transferred directly into the bank accounts of Ujjwala beneficiaries during April- June 2020 and 11.97 Crore cylinders were delivered to the PMUY beneficiaries.
- Now, the Cabinet has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas to extend the time-limit for availing the advance by three months.

**PRADHAN MANTRI GARIB KALYAN ANNA YOJANA (PMGKAY)**

Union Cabinet has approved further extension of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) as part of Economic Response to COVID-19, for another Five months from July to November, 2020.

**About:**

- Under the Scheme it is proposed to distribute 9.7 Lakh MT cleaned whole Chana to States/UTs for distribution to all beneficiary households under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) @ 1kg per month free of cost under for next five months -July to November, 2020 at a total estimated cost of Rs.6,849.24 crore.
- About 19.4 crore households would be covered under the Scheme.
- All expenses on the extended PMGKAY are to be borne by the Central Government.
- The distribution of pulses for the package emanated from robust availability of stock in the buffer which was set up in 2015-2016.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS  
EMPLOYEES PROVIDENT FUND (EPF)**

Union Cabinet has given its approval for extending the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) contribution to 24% (12% employees share and 12% employers share) for another three months from June to August 2020 under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)/Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

The salient features of the proposal are as under:

- For the wage months of June, July and August, 2020, the scheme will cover all the establishments having upto 100 employees and 90% of such employees earning less than Rs. 15,000 monthly wage.
- About 72.22 lakh workers working in 3.67 lakh establishments will be benefited and would likely to continue on their payrolls despite disruptions.
- Government will provide Budgetary Support of Rs.4800 crore for the year 2020-21 for this purpose.
- The beneficiaries entitled for 12% employers' contribution for the months of June to August, 2020 under Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY) will be excluded to prevent overlapping benefit.

## **INDIAN ECONOMY**

### **AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND**

Union Cabinet has given its approval to a new pan India Central Sector Scheme-Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.

About:

- The scheme shall provide a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support.
- Under the scheme, Rs. One Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), Marketing Cooperative Societies, FPOs, SHGs, Farmers, Joint Liability Groups (JLG), Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Startups etc.
- Loans will be disbursed in four years starting with sanction of Rs. 10,000 crore in the current year and Rs. 30,000 crore each in next three financial years.
- All loans under this financing facility will have interest subvention of 3% per annum up to a limit of Rs. 2 crore. This subvention will be available for a maximum period of seven years.
- Agri Infra fund will be managed and monitored through an online Management Information System (MIS) platform.
- The National, State and District level Monitoring Committees will be set up to ensure real-time monitoring and effective feed-back.
- The duration of the Scheme shall be from FY2020 to FY2029 (10 years).

### **AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING COMPLEXES (ARHCs)**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for developing of Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) for urban migrants/poor as a sub-scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY – U).

About:

- Existing vacant government funded housing complexes will be converted in ARHCs through Concession Agreements for 25 years. Complexes will revert to ULB after 25 years to restart next cycle like earlier or run on their own.
- Special incentives like use permission, 50% additional FAR/FSI, concessional loan at priority sector lending rate, tax reliefs at par with affordable housing etc. will be offered to private/ public entities to develop ARHCs on their own available vacant land for 25 years.
- A large part of workforce in manufacturing industries, service providers in hospitality, health and construction or other sectors, labourers, students etc. who come from rural areas or small towns seeking better opportunities will be the target beneficiary under ARHCs. Approximately, three Lakh beneficiaries will be covered initially under ARHCs.
- An expenditure of Rs 600 Crore is estimated in the form of Technology Innovation Grant which will be released for projects using identified innovative technologies for construction.

Related Info:

- Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has initiated an Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) for urban migrants/poor as a sub-scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban). The scheme was announced by the Finance Minister on 14 May, 2020.

### **MSME EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAMME**

The World Bank and the Government of India signed the \$750 million agreement for the MSME Emergency Response Programme.

About:

- The World Bank's MSME Emergency Response Programme will address the immediate liquidity and credit needs of some 1.5 million viable MSMEs to help them withstand the impact of the current shock and protect millions of jobs.
- The \$750 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a maturity of 19 years including a 5-year grace period.

**Strategy:**

- It will infuse liquidity to the MSME sector by de-risking lending from banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to MSMEs through a range of instruments, including credit guarantees.
- Improving the funding capacity of key market-oriented channels of credit, such as the NBFCs and Small Finance Bank (SFBs), will help them respond to the urgent and varied needs of the MSMEs.
- The program will incentivize and mainstream the use of fintech and digital financial services in MSME lending and payments

**Matsya Sampada**

Union Minister for Animal Husbandry launched the first edition of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Newsletter "MATSYA SAMPADA."

**About:**

- The Newsletter "MATSYA SAMPADA" aims to reach out to the stakeholders especially fishers and fish farmers through various means of communication, and to inform and educate them about the latest developments in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.
- It would be published on a quarterly basis starting from the first quarter of the year 2020-21.

**Related Info :**

The Government of India in May, 2020 launched a new Flagship Scheme i.e. the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) for sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector at an investment of Rs. 20050 crore.

**ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES****SECOND NATIONAL GANGA RIVER BASIN PROJECT (SNGRBP)**

The World Bank and the Government of India signed a loan agreement to enhance support for the Namami Gange programme that seeks to rejuvenate the Ganga river.

**About:**

- The Second National Ganga River Basin Project (SNGRBP) will help stem pollution in the river and strengthen the management of the river basin which is home to more than 500 million people.
- The \$400 million operation comprises a loan of \$381 million and a proposed Guarantee of up to \$19 million. The \$381 million variable spread loan has a maturity of 18.5 years including a grace period of 5 years. The \$19 million Guarantee Expiry Date will be 18 years from the Guarantee Effectiveness Date.
- The SNGRBP will finance sewage networks and treatment plants in select urban areas to help control pollution discharges.
- The Project will build on the innovative Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) of public private partnership introduced under the ongoing NGRBP.
- Under this model, the government pays a private operator 40 % of the capital cost to build a sewage treatment plant during the construction period; the remaining 60 % is paid as performance-linked payments over 15 years to ensure that the operator runs and maintains the plant efficiently.

**Related Info:**

- The World Bank has been supporting the government's efforts since 2011 through the ongoing National Ganga River Basin Project, which helped set up the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) as the nodal agency to manage the river, and financed sewage treatment infrastructure in several riverside towns and cities.

**GOLDEN BIRDWING**

A Himalayan butterfly named golden birdwing is now India's largest, a record the southern birdwing held for 88 years.

**About:**

- With a wingspan of 194 mm, the female of the species is marginally larger than the southern birdwing (190 mm). But the male golden birdwing (*Troides aeacus*) is much smaller at 106 mm.
- While the female golden birdwing was recorded from Didihat in Uttarakhand, the largest male was from the Wankhar Butterfly Museum in Shillong.

- According to the authors of the study, the only measurement used in the study of Lepidoptera is wingspan — a simple concept with various interpretations of the term.

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**

#### **OROPHARYNGEAL SECRETIONS**

Researchers have reported that testing of oropharyngeal secretions may reduce the number of false negative results i.e. when a person carrying a pathogen tests negative.

#### About:

- False negatives have been reported several times during the Covid-19 pandemic. These results have come up during nasal swab testing of patients who have seemingly recovered from the disease — but have later been found to be still carrying the virus.
- Now, researchers have reported that testing of oropharyngeal secretions — secretions from the part of the throat at the back of the mouth — may reduce the number of false negative results. They have published their findings in the Journal of Dental Research.

#### Oropharynx:

- The pharynx is the part of the throat behind the mouth and nasal cavity, and above the oesophagus and larynx.
- The human pharynx is conventionally divided into three sections: the nasopharynx, oropharynx, and laryngopharynx.
- The oropharynx lies behind the oral cavity, extending from the uvula to the level of the hyoid bone.

#### ZyCoV-D

The Central Drug Standard Control Organisation (CDSO), the National regulatory body for Indian Pharmaceuticals and medical devices, has granted approval to Zydus Cadila to initiate phase I and II human clinical trials in India for its potential COVID-19 vaccine 'ZyCoV-D.'

#### About:

- The Zydus' vaccine ZyCoV-D has been developed indigenously at the company's Vaccine Technology Centre in Ahmedabad after completing the pre-clinical phase.
- This is the second potential vaccine after Bharat Biotech COVAXIN which got the approval for human clinical trials.

### **DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

#### **Q. What is Operation Twist? Discuss its impact on the banking sector in India. (150 words)**

Operation twist is a programme adopted by the central bank (RBI in India) for quantitative easing. In this programme the proceeds from the sale of short term securities is used to buy long term government debt papers leading to earning of interest rates on the long term papers.

The Reserve Bank of India announced to carry out US-style 'Operation Twist' to boost the economy by bringing down long-term interest rates for the first time under Open Market Operations (OMOs).

Operation Twist was first used in 1961 by the US Federal Reserve (central bank) as a way to strengthen the U.S. dollar and stimulate cash flow into the economy.

#### Impact of Operation Twist

- Prices of bonds: As the central bank buys long-term securities (bonds), their demand rises which in turn pushes up their prices.
  - The bond yield comes down with an increase in prices (inverse relationship). If the yield is low, interest rates decrease.
- Bank operations: Due to CRR and SLR norms, banks are bound to keep some amount as Government securities.
  - Operation twist would enable the selling of their long-term bonds to the government since they would lose on yield if they held it for more time.
- Consumer demands: If the money meant for the long term would be available to the banks, they would lend it for economic activities such as buying houses, cars or financing projects at lower rates.
- Escaping stagflation: Greater borrowing to consumers by the bank could increase the overall demand in the economy.
  - This impetus to the market could rescue the Indian economy from slipping into stagflation due to the lagging economy in Covid-19 crisis.

#### Conclusion

Thus, Operation twist could help banks free up their long-term capital for boosting long-term investments and increasing their lending opportunities. It has been an optimistic and prompt remedy in the endeavour to restore the health of Indian economy.