

## 18 December 2019: PIB Summary & Analysis

### Special Economic Zone (SEZ)

#### Context:

Tripura gets its first SEZ, at Paschim Jalefa, Sabroom, South Tripura District. It will be a Sector Specific Economic Zone for Agro-Based Food Processing.

#### About SEZs:

- A Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is a specifically delineated duty-free enclave and shall be deemed to be foreign territory for the purposes of trade operations and duties and tariffs in India.
- It is an area within a country where there are different trade and business laws from the remaining regions of the country.
- SEZs are created to attract more investment, generate employment and also to better administer these areas.
- With a view to overcome the shortcomings experienced on account of the multiplicity of controls and clearances; absence of world-class infrastructure, and an unstable fiscal regime and with a view to attract larger foreign investments in India, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Policy was announced in April 2000.
- The Special Economic Zones Act, 2005, was passed by Parliament in 2005.
- After extensive consultations, the SEZ Act, 2005, supported by SEZ Rules, came into effect in 2006.
- **The main objectives of the SEZ Act are:**
  - Generation of additional economic activity
  - Promotion of exports of goods and services
  - Promotion of investment from domestic and foreign sources
  - Creation of employment opportunities
  - Development of infrastructure facilities
- **Facilities and incentives for SEZs:**
  - Duty-free import/domestic procurement of goods for development, operation and maintenance of SEZ units.
  - 100% Income tax exemption on export income for SEZ units under the Income Tax Act for first 5 years, 50% for next 5 years thereafter and 50% of the ploughed back export profit for next 5 years. (Sunset Clause for Units will become effective from 2020).
  - Exemption from Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT).
  - Exemption from Central Sales Tax, Exemption from Service Tax and Exemption from State sales tax. These have now subsumed into GST and supplies to SEZs are zero-rated under the IGST Act, 2017.
  - Single window clearance for Central and State level approvals.
- SEZ developers also receive many such incentives and benefits.
- Currently, there are more than 200 operational SEZs in India.

---

### Sahitya Akademi Awards

#### Context:

The Sahitya Akademi announced its annual Sahitya Akademi Awards in 23 languages.

### About the Sahitya Akademi Awards:

- The Sahitya Akademi Award is a literary honour given by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters.
- It is conferred annually on writers of the most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the major Indian languages (24 languages including English plus the 22 listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution).
- The awards were first given in 1955.
- Currently, the award includes a plaque and a cash prize of Rs.1,00,000.
- The award's purpose is to recognize and promote excellence in Indian writing and also acknowledge new trends.
- The annual process of selecting the awardees runs for the preceding twelve months.
- Apart from the 22 scheduled languages, the two others included in the awards are English and Rajasthani.

### This year's awards:

- According to the official press release, seven books of poetry, four novels, six short stories, three non-fiction books and three essays have won the award this year.
- MP Shashi Tharoor is among the awardees this year. He won the prize for his English non-fiction "An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India".

### About the Sahitya Akademi:

- Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, is the central institution for literary dialogue, publication and promotion in the country and the only institution that undertakes literary activities in 24 Indian languages, including English.
- It endeavours to promote good taste and healthy reading habits, to keep alive the intimate dialogue among the various linguistic and literary zones and groups through seminars, lectures, symposia, discussions, readings and performances, to increase the pace of mutual translations through workshops and individual assignments.
- It also works to develop a serious literary culture through the publications of journals, monographs, individual creative works of every genre, anthologies, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, bibliographies, who's who of writers and histories of literature.
- It was established in 1954 and is headquartered in New Delhi.
- It runs as an autonomous organisation.

---

## Indian Coast Guard

### Context:

The Indian Coast Guard held the 18<sup>th</sup> National Maritime Search and Rescue Board meeting.

### About the Indian Coast Guard (ICG):

- The Indian Coast Guard is a multi-mission organisation, conducting round-the-year real-life operations at sea.
- It is headed by the Director General Indian Coast Guard (DGICG) exercising his overall command and superintendence from the Coast Guard Headquarters (CGHQ) located at New Delhi.
- It has jurisdiction over the territorial waters of India, including its contiguous zone and exclusive

economic zone.

- It was formally established in 1978 by the Coast Guard Act as an independent armed force of India.
  - It operates under the Ministry of Defence.
  - For effective command and control, the Maritime Zones of India are divided into five Coast Guard Regions, namely, North-West (HQ Gandhinagar), West (HQ Mumbai), East (HQ Chennai), North-East (HQ Kolkata) and Andaman & Nicobar (Port Blair).
  - **ICG's Mission:**
    - EEZ Security
    - Coastal Security
    - Offshore Security
    - Marine Safety
    - Marine Environment Protection
    - Scientific Assistance
    - National Defence (in war)
  - **Duties of the Coast Guard:**
    - Ensuring the safety and protection of artificial islands, offshore terminals, installations and other structures and devices in any maritime zone.
    - Providing protection and assistance to fishermen in distress while at sea.
    - Preservation and protection of India's maritime environment including prevention and control of marine pollution.
    - Assisting the Customs and other authorities in anti-smuggling operations.
    - Enforcement of Maritime Zones of India Act.
    - Precautionary measures for the safety of life and property at sea and the collection of scientific data.
- 

## “Minorities Day” programme

### Context:

The Union Minister for Minority Affairs addressed the ‘Minorities Day’ programme organised by the National Commission for Minorities.

### Details:

- In his address, the Minister talked about the following schemes which were instituted for the welfare and empowerment of minorities.
- **Gharib Nawaz Employment Scheme:** This scheme provides short-term job-oriented skill development courses to minority youth in order to enable them for skill-based employment.
- **Seekho aur Kamao:** This scheme aims at upgrading the skills of minority youth in various modern and traditional vocations depending on their educational qualifications, present economic trends, and the market potential, enabling them to get suitable livelihood or go for self-employment. One of the objectives of this programme is to reduce the unemployment rate among minority youth.
- **Nai Manzil:** Launched in 2015, this scheme aims to benefit the minority youth who do not have a formal school leaving certificate, i.e. those in the category of school dropouts or educated in community education institutions like Madarsas. The Scheme provides them with formal education and skills and enables them to seek better employment and livelihood in the organised sector.
- **Nai Roshni:** Know more about Nai Roshni Scheme [here](#).
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karykram (PMJVK):** It aims at improving the socio-economic conditions of the minorities and providing basic amenities to them for improving the quality of life of the people and reducing imbalances in the identified minority concentration areas. The projects under

PMJVK would be related to the creation of infrastructure mainly in the sectors of education, health and skill development, besides innovative schemes for improving the socio-economic and living conditions of minority communities and other communities living in the catchment area.

---

## Year End Review - 2019 of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas

### Context:

The Petroleum & Natural Gas Ministry's year-end review for 2019 is briefly given below.

### Details:

- The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas is concerned with the exploration and production of Oil & Natural Gas, refining, distribution and marketing, import, export and conservation of petroleum products.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**
  - This scheme was launched with the objective to provide clean cooking fuel to poor households, especially in rural areas ensuring universal coverage of LPG as cooking gas in the country.
  - Read more about PMUY [here](#).
- **Pahal**
  - The Government has introduced a well-targeted system of subsidy delivery to LPG consumers through PAHAL.
  - This initiative of the Government was aimed at rationalizing subsidies, based on an approach to cut subsidy leakages, but not subsidies themselves.
  - It was launched in 2014 for providing the direct benefits transfer of LPG subsidy to the bank account of the LPG consumers.
  - PAHAL Scheme has been designed to ensure that the benefit meant for the genuine domestic customer reaches them directly and is not diverted.
  - The scheme has helped in identifying 'ghost' connections, multiple connections and inactive connections which in turn has resulted in curbing diversion of subsidized LPG to commercial purposes.
- **Reforms in Exploration and Licensing Policy**
  - The Government notified 'Reforms in Exploration and Licensing Policy' for enhancing domestic exploration and production of oil and gas.
  - This was aimed at intensifying exploration activities, attracting foreign and domestic investment and enhancing domestic production.
  - The reforms included, among others, a cutting down on the required government approvals, speedy dispute resolution mechanism, and a single-window electronic approval mechanism.
- **Petroleum Exploration Licenses**
  - The Central Government has already granted Petroleum Exploration Licenses (PELs) for all the offshore blocks and also recommended to all the concerned State Governments to grant PELs for all on-land blocks allocated under Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) regime.
- **National Seismic Programme (NSP)**
  - This was launched to trace hydrocarbon resources like oil and natural gas in the Mahanadi basin (initially – as the first roll-out of the scheme).
  - NSP aims to undertake a fresh appraisal in all sedimentary basins across India in order to have a better understanding of the hydrocarbon potential of the country.
- **National Data Repository (NDR)**

- The NDR was established by the Government to assimilate, preserve and upkeep the vast amount of data which could be organised and regulated for use in future exploration and development, besides use by R&D and other educational institutions.
  - **Auto Fuel Vision and Policy**
    - BS-IV Auto Fuels have been implemented in the entire country with effect from 2017.
    - It has also been decided that the country will leapfrog directly from BS-IV to BS-VI fuel standards and BS-VI standards will be implemented in the entire country from April 2020.
  - **Liberalization of Norms of Private Sector Participation in the Retail Sector**
  - **National Gas Grid**
    - The government has identified the development of an additional 15000 km of gas pipeline and various pipeline sections to complete the gas grid.
  - **Promotion of LNG/CNG in Vehicles**
    - The Government is meeting 100% of the gas requirement of PNG (Domestic) and CNG (Transport) segment of the City Gas Distribution (CGD) networks across the country.
  - **Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme**
    - The Government of India launched this programme in 2003 for undertaking blending of ethanol in petrol to address the environmental concerns due to fossil fuel burning, provide remuneration to farmers, subsidize crude imports and achieve forex savings.
  - **Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (Jai Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran) Yojana**
    - In order to encourage setting up of second-generation bio-fuels plants, the Government has launched this scheme for providing financial support to integrated bio-ethanol projects, using lignocellulosic biomass and other renewable feedstock.
- 

## **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**

### **Context:**

The Union Minister for Rural Development inaugurated the third phase of the PMGSY.

### **About the PMGSY:**

- This scheme was launched by the Government of India to provide connectivity to unconnected habitations as part of a poverty reduction strategy.
- The Ministry of Rural Development, along with state governments, is responsible for the implementation of PMGSY.
- Rural road connectivity is a key component of rural development and poverty alleviation.
- The main objective of the scheme is to provide good all-weather road connectivity.
- The idea behind this is that road connectivity would increase access to social and economic services in rural areas.

