

18 February 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

1. Soil Health Card Day

Context:

Soil Health Card Day is observed on February 19th as it was the day in 2015 when the Soil Health Card Scheme was launched by the Prime Minister.

Details:

- The scheme was launched in 2015, which was also observed as the 'International Year of Soils'.
- The objectives of the **Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme** are to issue soil health cards to farmers every two years so as to provide a basis to address nutritional deficiencies in fertilization practices.
- Soil testing is developed to promote soil test based on nutrient management. Soil testing reduces cultivation cost by application of the right quantity of fertilizer. It ensures additional income to farmers by an increase in yields and it also promotes sustainable farming.
- **Deterioration of the soil's chemical, physical and biological health is considered as one of the reasons for the stagnation of agricultural productivity in India.**
 - Indian soils are working with negative nutrient balance to the tune of 12-14 million tons per year and the negative balance is likely to increase in the future even after using the full potential of the fertilizer industry.
 - The Nutrient deficiency in India is in the order of:
 - 95% - Nitrogen (N)
 - 94% - Phosphorus (P)
 - 48% - Potassium (K)
 - 25% - Sulphur (S)
 - 41% - Zinc (Zn)
 - 20% - Boron (B)
 - 14% - Iron (Fe)
 - 8% - Manganese (Mn)
 - 6% - Copper (Cu)
 - The limiting nutrients do not allow the full expression of other nutrients, lower the fertilizer response and crop productivity.
 - Improving fertilizer/nutrient use efficiency is important rather than applying more fertilizer in Indian agriculture.
 - Nutrient use efficiency presently is low ranging from 30-50% (Nitrogen), 15-20% (Phosphorus), 60-70% (Potassium), 8-10% (Sulphur) and 1-2% (micronutrients).
 - The overall strategy for increasing crop yields and sustaining them at a high level must include an integrated approach for managing soil health along with other complementary measures that have a major impact on soil quality, plant growth, crop productivity and agricultural sustainability.
- **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme:**
 - The Government is also implementing the NBS scheme and promoting customized and fortified fertilizers for the balanced use of fertilizers.
 - So far, 21 fertilizers have been brought under the NBS scheme. Presently, 35 customized and 25 fortified fertilizers notified by the Government are in use.
- Given that more than half of India's 1.27 billion population depends on agriculture for their livelihood, the declining productivity of soil should be a matter of grave concern for all especially the fact that 86% of these farmers are marginal and small category ones.
- Soil is a vital resource for achieving food, nutritional, environmental and livelihood security and thereby managing soil resources and conserving this vital natural resource base for future generations

without any deterioration is a major challenge in the 21st century.

- A 2017 study by the National Productivity Council (NPC) found that the SHC scheme has promoted sustainable farming and led to a decrease in the use of chemical fertilizer application in the range of 8-10%.
- Besides, an overall increase in the yield of crops to the tune of 5-6% was reported due to the application of fertilizer and micronutrients as per recommendations available in the Soil Health Cards.

For more on Soil Health Card Scheme, check [PIB dated Feb 5, 2020](#).

2. Exports from SEZs

Context:

Exports from SEZs achieve USD 100 Billion mark.

Details:

- The [Special Economic Zones \(SEZs\)](#) continue to take the lead in expanding exports for the country.
 - As of February 2020, SEZs achieved 100-billion-dollar worth of exports in the FY 2019-20.
 - It is noteworthy to mention that in the previous FY 2018-19, the landmark USD 100 billion worth of exports was achieved in the full financial year.
 - The **services segment**, constituting majorly of IT & ITES services was the driver of the export growth at 23.69 %.
 - Manufacturing also grew at 4%.
 - The number of operational SEZs has grown to 241 as against 235 at the end of FY 2018-19.
 - Important sectors that saw healthy growth in this financial year include:
 - Gems & Jewellery (13.3%)
 - Trading & Logistics (35%)
 - Leather & Footwear (15%)
 - Non-Conventional Energy (47%)
 - Textiles & Garments (17.6%)
 - Petrochemicals constitute a major segment of SEZ exports; however, growth was muted in this segment which may be attributed to the softening of global crude prices.
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3. Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

Context:

Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses has been renamed as Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

Details:

- Manohar Parikkar was India's Defence Minister from November 2014 to March 2017.

About the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA):

- An autonomous body under the Ministry of Defence, IDSA was established as a registered society in New Delhi in 1965, dedicated to objective research and policy-relevant studies on all aspects of defence and security.
 - Its aim is to promote national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defence and security-related issues.
 - To achieve its goals, the institute undertakes scholarly research, policy-oriented research, dissemination of research findings, training and capacity building and public education.
 - The IDSA has a well-qualified multi-disciplinary research faculty drawn from academia, defence forces, etc., representing a diversity of views.
 - Research at the Institute is driven by a comprehensive agenda and the need to provide impartial analyses and policy recommendations.
 - Since its inception, IDSA has served as a forum to debate important aspects of national and international security.
 - The institute conducts several national and international conferences every year and regularly holds round tables and workshops on important developments.
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4. Matribhasha Diwas

Context:

The Matribhasha Diwas which falls on 21st February will be celebrated by the HRD Ministry across the country.

Details:

- MHRD along with educational institutions and language institutions have been celebrating the Matribhasha Diwas for the past three years.
- This year also educational institutions will organize activities like elocution, debating, singing, essay writing competitions, painting competitions, music and dramatic performances, exhibitions, online resources and activities as well as events exploring the cognitive, economic, social and cultural activities of a multilingual society, exhibitions depicting the linguistic and diverse wealth of India in at least two languages and also more.
- The theme for 2020 is “Celebrating our Multilingual Heritage”.
- **International Mother Language Day (IMLD)** is a worldwide annual observance forming a part of UNESCO’s calendar of events, held on 21st February to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.
- It was first announced by UNESCO in November 1999. It was formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2008. The latter called upon its member states “to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by people of the world”.
- Reflecting India’s unparalleled cultural and linguistic diversity, the MHRD has decided to celebrate Matribhasha Diwas on 21.2.2020 every year, to promote the use of mother tongues and to achieve the following objectives:-
 - Highlight the linguistic diversity of our country.
 - Encourage usage, not only of the respective mother tongue but other Indian languages as well.
 - To understand and draw attention to the diversity of cultures in India and the consequent forums of literature, craft, performing arts, scripts and other forms of creative expression.

- To encourage the learning of languages other than one's own mother tongue.
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5. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)

Context:

MSDE organized a consultative workshop with State representatives to further strengthen skilling and entrepreneurship initiative.

Details:

- During the workshop, Vision 2025 was discussed which lays out the key focus areas and ready-to-implement roadmap for promoting Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in the country.
- The Centre proposed that the District Skill Committees (DSCs) should be further empowered with substantial fund allocation to ensure stringent monitoring and evaluation of skill training under the next phase of [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana \(PMKVY\)](#).
- MSDE has recently introduced the **Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF)**:
 - It is an initiative designed and implemented by IIM Bangalore in collaboration with State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs).
 - Under this scheme, fellows will be posted in districts for 2 years working closely with the district administration to create specific State Skill Development Plans.
- Relevant local and state-level programs will also receive additional funding under the [SANKALP scheme](#) of the MSDE.

Also read: [Skill India Mission](#)

6. KALA KUMBH – Handicrafts Exhibitions

Context:

With an objective to promote Geographical Indication (GI) crafts and heritage of India, the Ministry of Textiles is organising Kala Kumbh - Handicrafts Thematic Exhibition in various parts of the country through the Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts).

Details:

- The exhibitions are planned in various major cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai.
- The exhibitions are sponsored by the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH).
 - The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) was established under Companies Act in the year 1986-87 and is a non-profit organisation, with an object to promote, support, protect, maintain and increase the export of handicrafts.
 - It is an apex body of handicrafts exporters for the promotion of exports of handicrafts from the country and projecting India's image abroad as a reliable supplier of high quality of handicrafts goods & services.

GI Tags:

- A GI or Geographical Indication is a name or a sign given to certain products that relate to a specific geographical location or origins like a region, town or country.
- The GI tag is used on handicrafts which correspond to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g., a town, region, or country).
- As of August 2019, 178 GI handicraft products were registered from all over India.

For more on GI Tags and List of GI Tags in India, click [here](#).

7. Swachh Iconic Places (SIP)

Context:

The 3rd Annual Review meeting on Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) was held at Baidyanath Dham Deoghar, Jharkhand.

About SIP:

- It is an initiative under the [Swachh Bharat Mission](#).
- It is a special clean-up initiative focused on select iconic heritage, spiritual and cultural places in the country.
- It is under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in association with other ministries such as Culture, Urban Development, Tourism and the concerned state governments.

For more on the [Swachh Iconic Places \(SIP\)](#), click on the linked article.