

5 February 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

1. Indian Institutes of Information Technology Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020

Context:

Cabinet approves the Indian Institutes of Information Technology Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Impact of the Bill:

- The Bill will declare the remaining 5 IIITs-PPP along with the existing 15 Indian Institutes of Information Technology in Public Private Partnership mode as 'Institutions of National Importance' with powers to award degrees.
- This will entitle them to use the nomenclature of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) or Master of Technology (M.Tech) or Ph.D. degree as issued by a University or Institution of National Importance.
- It will also enable the Institutes to attract enough students required to develop a strong research base in the country in the field of information technology.
- The bill was introduced to grant statutory status to five Indian Institutes of Information Technology in Public Private Partnership mode at Surat, Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala and Raichur and declare them as Institutions of National Importance along with already existing 15 Indian Institutes of Information Technology under the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (Public-Private Partnership) Act, 2017.
- These five IIITs are already functioning as Societies and they will now be covered under the IIIT (PPP) Act, 2017, similar to the other 15 IIITs established under the scheme in PPP mode.

Background:

- IIITs are envisaged to promote higher education and research in the field of Information Technology.

For more on **institutions of national importance**, check [PIB dated Jan 8, 2020](#).

2. Soil Health Card scheme

Context:

In the second phase of the scheme's implementation, 11.69 crore Soil Health Cards were distributed to farmers in two years.

About the Soil Health Card Scheme:

- The scheme was launched in 2014 with a view to addressing the decline of soil nutrients.
- The scheme has helped farmers to understand the soil health parameters and improve its productivity by judicious application of soil nutrients.
- Under this scheme, farmers can know the major and minor nutrients available in their soils which will ensure judicious use of fertiliser application and reduce the cost of inputs and improve soil fertility.
- A Soil Health Card is used to assess the current status of soil health and, when used over time, to determine changes in soil health that are affected by land management.

- It displays soil health indicators and associated descriptive terms. The indicators are typically based on farmers' practical experience and knowledge of local natural resources.
 - The card lists soil health indicators that can be assessed without the aid of technical or laboratory equipment.
 - A study conducted by the National Productivity Council (NPC) says the application of Soil Health Card recommendations has led to a **decline** of 8-10% **in the use of chemical fertilizers** and also raised productivity by 5-6%.
 - A pilot project "**Development of Model Villages**" is being implemented under which the sampling and testing of cultivable soil are being encouraged in partnership with the farmers.
 - Under the project, a Model Village has been selected for aggregation of soil samples and analysis of each agricultural holding.
 - The scheme provides for the analysis of soil composition by the State Governments once in every two years so that remedial steps can be taken to improve soil nutrients.
 - Farmers can track their soil samples and also obtain their Soil Health Card report.
 - The scheme also aids in creating employment for rural youth.
 - Under the scheme, village youth and farmers up to 40 years of age are eligible to set up Soil Health Laboratories and undertake testing.
 - A laboratory costs up to Rs Five Lakhs, 75% of which can be funded by the Central and State Governments.
 - The same provisions apply to Self Help Groups, Farmers' Cooperative Societies, Farmers Groups and Agricultural Producing Organisations.
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3. Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)

Context:

MPEDA in association with the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) is organising the 22nd edition of India International Seafood Show (IISS) 2020 in Kochi in February 2020.

Details:

- The theme of this year's seafood show is "Blue Revolution- Beyond Production to Value Addition".
- Over 200 exhibitors, 350 stalls and more than 5000 delegates, including foreign delegates, are expected to attend the three-day event at Kochi.
- The delegates include seafood processors, buyers and stakeholders, from other related sectors, representing firms in India and abroad.
- The biennial show will provide a platform for Indian exporters and overseas importers of Indian marine products to interact.
- It will also give an opportunity for display and sale for manufacturers and suppliers of processing machinery, packaging systems, processing ingredient dealers and cold chain systems.
- The seafood show will also give service providers like the logistics and certifying and testing segments an opportunity to showcase their products.
- The IISS is one of the oldest and largest seafood events in the world. It attracts seafood traders from major markets like the USA, EU, Japan, South East Asia and other countries.
- The show is expected to help enhance FDI inflows and also contribute to the [Make in India](#)

Background:

- During 2018-19 India has exported over 14,37,000 tons of marine products worth USD 6.70 billion as per provisional figures.

- With a multi-pronged strategy, addressing capture fisheries and aquaculture, it is expected to achieve an export turnover of USD 15 billion in the next five years.
- Sustainable fishing methods, value addition and increased aquaculture production through diversification will support this target set out for the export of India's marine products.

About MPEDA:

- MPEDA is a statutory organisation set up under the Marine Products Export Development Authority Act (MPEDA), 1972.
 - It has the mandate to promote the marine products industry with special reference to exports from the country.
 - It regulates exports of marine products and takes all measures required for ensuring sustained, quality seafood exports from the country.
 - It is also empowered to carry out inspection of marine products, its raw material, fixing standards, specifications, and training as well as take all necessary steps for marketing the seafood overseas.
 - It is under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
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4. Quality Council of India (QCI)

About the QCI:

- The Quality Council of India (QCI) works for the promotion of **Quality Standards** across various economic and social sectors such as manufacturing, education, health and environment.
- The QCI has been established as a national body for accreditation on the recommendation of an Expert Mission of the EU after consultation in Inter-Ministerial Task Force, Committee of Secretaries and Group of Ministers through a Cabinet decision in 1996.
- Accordingly, the QCI was set up through a PPP model as an independent autonomous organization with the support of the GOI and the Indian industry represented by the three premier industry associations, Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
- The QCI is the umbrella organisation of five boards:
 - NABL - National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories
 - NABH- National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare
 - NABET- National Accreditation Board for Education and Training
 - NABCB- National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies
 - NBQP- National Board for Quality Promotion
- Besides carrying out accreditation, certification, empanelment and third-party assessment activities through its Boards, QCI is also involved in project initiation, planning & development and its successful execution for various ministries, Government departments and State Governments.

Context:

The above information was provided by the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry in the Lok Sabha.

5. Regulation of Online Retailers

Context:

With allegations against e-commerce companies that they were violating the norms laid down by the government, it issued a press note in 2018 to clarify the FDI policy in relation to e-commerce companies.

Details:

- E-Commerce companies having foreign investment can operate only a marketplace model and there are restrictions on the inventory based model of e-commerce.
 - E-commerce entities providing marketplace will not directly or indirectly influence the sale price of goods or services and shall maintain level playing field.
 - Services should be provided by e-commerce marketplace entity or other entities in which e-commerce marketplace entity has direct or indirect equity participation or common control, to vendors on the platform at arm's length and in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.
 - Such services will include but not limited to fulfilment, logistics, warehousing, advertisement/marketing, payments and financing.
 - Cash back provided by group companies of marketplace entity to buyers shall be fair and non-discriminatory.
 - For the purposes of this clause, provision of services to any vendor on such terms that are not made available to other vendors in similar circumstances will be deemed unfair and discriminatory.
 - Representations have been received in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) alleging that some e-commerce platforms are engaged in predatory pricing and are providing excessive discounts. These representations are under examination.
 - The [Competition Commission of India](#) has ordered investigation against FlipKart and Amazon in order to determine whether the alleged exclusive arrangements, deep-discounting and preferential listing are being used as an exclusionary tactic to foreclose competition under a section of the Competition Act, 2002.
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6. Defence Minister meets his counterparts from five countries

Context:

The Defence Minister held meetings with his counterparts from the UAE, the UK, the Maldives, Oman and Kyrgyzstan in the backdrop of the Def Expo 2020.

Details:

- To know more about the Def Expo 2020, check [PIB dated 1st Feb 2020](#).
 - In his various meetings, the Defence Ministers stressed on the importance of defence cooperation with India in the overall bilateral relations. They also talked about measures to strengthen the same.
 - India and Kyrgyzstan agreed that the Joint Exercise involving the Special Forces of India and Kyrgyzstan named **Khanjar VII** shall be held soon in India.
 - Khanjar Exercise is a joint military exercise conducted between India and Kyrgyzstan.
 - The first edition was held in 2011 in India.
 - The common theme among views expressed by the visiting dignitaries was to express gratitude for the invitation to visit DefExpo 2020 and conveyed their best wishes for the success of the event, which had proved to be an effective platform for sharing, collaborating and cooperating on various defence technologies.
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7. Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction

Context:

National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) organizes a conference on Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: Pathways For Inclusion and Action for Resilience.

Details:

- The conference highlighted the need for developing a holistic approach for disability-inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Apart from empowering persons with disabilities for inclusion in disaster risk reduction, there is also a need to mainstream disability inclusion in local level actions.
- There are challenges faced in rescuing disabled victims during disaster scenarios.

For more on [disaster management in India](#), click on the linked article.

8. Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana

Context:

New pension schemes for unorganised sector.

Details:

- The Government has introduced two voluntary and contributory Pension Schemes:
 - Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojna (PM-SYM): A pension scheme for the Unorganised Workers
 - National Pension Scheme for the Traders and Self Employed Persons (NPS-Traders) under Section 3(1) of the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 to provide old age protection to them
- The schemes envisage for providing a minimum assured monthly pension of Rs. 3000/- after attaining the age of 60 years.
 - If the subscriber dies, the spouse of the beneficiary shall be entitled to 50% of the pension as a family pension.
 - Family pension is applicable only to the spouse.
 - The monthly contribution ranges from Rs.55 to Rs.200/- depending upon the entry age of the beneficiary.
- For more on Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojna (PM-SYM), click [here](#).
- **NPS-Traders Scheme:**
 - This scheme is meant for old age protection and social security of Vyapaaris (retail traders/shopkeepers and self-employed persons) whose annual turnover is not exceeding Rs.1.5 crores.
 - These retail traders/petty shopkeepers and self-employed persons are mostly working as shop owners, retail traders, rice mill owners, oil mill owners, workshop owners, commission agents, brokers of real estate, owners of small hotels, restaurants and other Vyapaaris. The entry age for the scheme is 18-40 years and the Vyapaari should not be a member of ESIC/EPFO/PM-SYM or an income taxpayer.

- The schemes are being implemented through Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India and Common Service Centres. LIC is the Fund Manager and responsible for pension pay-out.
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9. Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

Context:

A total of 132 distribution camps have been organised across the country under the scheme of 'Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)' since its inception.

The scheme is a demand-driven scheme and funded from the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund.

About the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana:

To know more about the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, check [PIB dated Dec 20, 2019](#).

10. National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction

Context:

Implementation of the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR).

About NAPDDR:

- The National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) is the technical resource agency for implementing the activities of the NAPDDR across the country.
 - NISD through various stakeholders has conducted awareness programmes and campaigns in schools and colleges.
 - More about NAPDDR on [PIB dated 3rd Dec 2019](#).
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11. Review of Creamy Layer for SCs/STs and OBCs

For more on this issue, check [CNA dated 3rd Dec 2019](#).

12. India becomes second largest steel producer of Crude Steel

Details:

- As per World Steel Association data, India became the second-largest steel producer of crude steel after China in 2018 and 2019, by replacing Japan.

- India's crude steel production in 2018 increased by 7.7 per cent when compared to 2017.
- **Steel being a deregulated sector**, the Government does not set any annual targets for steel production. The decision on the quantity of steel production is taken by individual companies based on commercial considerations and market requirements.
- However, the Government has taken various steps to boost export competitiveness:
 - Export promotion schemes like MEIS, Market Access initiative, Export Promotion Council, Advance Authorization, etc.
 - Maintaining very low import duty on critical inputs like coking coal, iron ore, steel scrap, nickel, etc.
 - Promoting multi-modal logistics and enhancing the use of inland waterways and coastal shipping to reduce logistics cost, which is significant for the steel industry.

Context:

The above information was given by the Union Minister of Steel in the Rajya Sabha.

13. Atal Innovation Mission

Context:

With a vision to bring together the stakeholders of the food processing and agriculture sector in India, the Atal Innovation Mission started a series of innovation demo days where start-ups, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), entrepreneurs, corporate partners and sector academics are brought together for a showcase of government-funded innovations.

Details:

- The innovation demo day series initiative aims at promoting commercialisation of technologies funded by the Ministries of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and Food Processing and Industries.
- It also aims at connecting innovation with sectors like the Indian MSME industry and government-funded research industries.
- The event is called 'ARISE demo day'.
- ARISE is a part of the Atal Innovation Mission and stands for 'Atal Research & Innovation for Small Enterprises'.

About Atal Innovation Mission:

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Indian Government's flagship programme to foster a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation. Under it, there are the following:
 - [Atal Tinkering Labs](#)
 - Atal Incubation Centres
 - [Atal New India Challenge](#)
 - Mentor of Change Program
 - Atal Community Innovation Center
 - Atal Research & Innovation for Small Enterprises (ARISE)

About ARISE:

- ARISE is an initiative to promote research, innovation and competitiveness of Indian startups and small enterprises including Micro, Small, and Medium enterprises.

- ARISE will be a multi-phase, multi-sector, and multi-stakeholder program to identify, fund, guide, hand-hold, and procure from Indian startups and small enterprises.
- It aims to inculcate a culture and mind set of engaging and co-creating amongst the industry as well as the government, to improve India's import substitution capabilities, develop export leadership in nation-critical sectors, and provide indigenous solutions for challenges in India.

