

16 March 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

1. UDAN Scheme

Context:

First-ever Indore – Kishangarh flight commenced under UDAN.

Details:

To read more on the [UDAN Scheme](#), click on the linked article.

2. Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

Context:

Index Numbers of Wholesale Price in India (Base: 2011-12=100) for the month of February released.

Details:

The official Wholesale Price Index for 'All Commodities' (Base: 2011-12=100) for the month of February 2020 declined by 0.6% to 122.2 (provisional) from 122.9 (provisional) for the previous month (January '20).

To know more about the [Wholesale Price Index \(WPI\)](#), click on the linked article.

3. World Heritage Sites in India

Details:

At present, India has 38 World Heritage Sites.

For the full list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India, click [here](#).

Context:

The above information was given by the Union Minister of State (I/c) for Culture and Tourism in the Lok Sabha.

Also read [PIB dated March 2, 2020](#), for a note on the World Heritage List and the Tentative List.

4. Privatisation of Companies

Context:

The Government has given 'in-principle' approval for the privatisation of 24 Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) including subsidiaries, units and joint ventures with sale of majority stake and transfer of management control.

Details:

- The Government follows a policy of strategic disinvestment of CPSEs, which are not in 'priority sectors'.
 - For this purpose, [NITI Aayog](#) has been mandated to identify such CPSEs based on the criteria of National Security, Sovereign function at arm's length, Market Imperfections and Public Purpose.
 - Strategic disinvestment of CPSEs is being guided by the basic economic principle that the Government should discontinue in sectors where competitive markets have come of age and economic potential of such entities may be better discovered in the hands of strategic investor due to various factors such as infusion of capital, technological upgradation and efficient management practices; and would thus add to the GDP of the country.
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5. Fake Currency

Details:

- As per data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there is a declining trend in **Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN)** seized during the years 2017, 2018 and 2019.
- The government has taken various measures to check the smuggling and circulation of FICN in the country, which inter alia, include:
 - **FICN Coordination Group (FCORD)** has been formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs to share intelligence/information among the security agencies of the state/centre to counter the problem of circulation of fake currency cases.
 - A **Terror Funding and Fake Currency Cell (TFFC)** has been constituted in the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\)](#) to investigate terror funding and fake currency cases.
 - A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between India and Bangladesh to prevent and counter-smuggling and circulation of fake currency notes.
 - Security at the international borders has been strengthened by using new surveillance technology, deploying additional manpower for round the clock surveillance, establishing observations posts along the international border, erection of border fencing and intensive patrolling.

Context:

The above information was given by the Union Minister of State for Finance in the Lok Sabha.

6. Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

About the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA):

- Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is inspired by the vision of transformational change in rural development

processes by leveraging knowledge institutions to help build the architecture of an Inclusive India.

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) launched UBA with an aim to connect institutions of higher education, including Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and Indian Institutes of Science Education & Research (IISERs), etc. with local communities to address the development challenges through appropriate technologies.
- **Mission:**
 - The Mission of the scheme is to enable higher educational institutions to work with the people of rural India in identifying development challenges and evolving appropriate solutions for accelerating sustainable growth.
 - It also aims to create a virtuous cycle between society and an inclusive academic system by providing knowledge and practices for emerging professions and to upgrade the capabilities of both the public and the private sectors in responding to the development needs of rural India.
- **The main objectives of UBA are:**
 - To engage the faculty and students of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in identifying development issues in rural areas and finding sustainable solutions for the same.
 - Identify & select existing innovative technologies, enable customisation of technologies, or devise implementation methods for innovative solutions, as required by the people.
 - To allow HEIs to contribute to devising systems for the smooth implementation of various Government programmes.
- Currently, under the scheme UBA, 13072 villages have been adopted by 2474 Institutes.
- The technology interventions under the scheme have been able to transform the living conditions in villages.
- The technological interventions under the UBA cover different subjects broadly categorized as follows:
 - Sustainable agriculture
 - Water resource management
 - Artisans, industries and livelihood
 - Basic amenities (infrastructure & services) and rural energy system
- With the interventions in the above-mentioned areas, various new and old technologies have been developed which have transformed the living conditions in villages.
- Some of the technological interventions done under the scheme are:
 - Mushroom Cultivation done in Gendikata cluster (IIT Delhi)
 - Environment Controlled Automated Green House For High Valued Agro Produce (HVPM College of Engineering and Technology, Amravati)
 - Safe Drinking Water (NIT Manipur and IIT Jodhpur)
 - Paper bag making (BITS Mesra)
 - Pattal crockery making (NIT Hamirpur)
 - Cloth Bag making (Fatima College, Madurai)
 - Revamping of Govt. schools in Vrindavan Cluster (IIT Delhi)
 - Improved Pottery Kiln in Farrukhnagar cluster (IIT Delhi)
 - Thread winding machine for weavers (Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Etcherla, AP)
 - Agriculture drone system (Santhiram Engineering College, Nandyal, AP)

Context:

The above information was given by the Union Minister for Human Resource Development in the Lok Sabha.

7. Mission Solar Charkha

Context:

The Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises talked about the Solar Charkha Mission in the Rajya Sabha.

About the Solar Charkha Mission:

For details about the Solar Charkha Mission, check [PIB dated March 5th, 2020](#).

8. FASTag

Context:

Deadline for Mandatory Payment of Tolls at NHS.

Details:

- In July 2019, the Government announced the FASTag mandate of declaring all lanes except one lane of National Highways fee plazas as “FASTag lane of Fee Plaza” w.e.f. 1st December 2019.
 - In order to facilitate sufficient lead time to citizens to obtain [FASTag](#), the mandate was shifted to 15th December 2019 and the system was implemented across the country.
 - Considering the request of the [National Highways Authority of India \(NHAI\)](#) and keeping in view inconvenience to citizens, the Government decided that 25 percent of the FASTag lanes may be temporarily converted to hybrid lanes with the approval of the Regional Officer concerned for next 30 days from 15th December 2019.
 - It was further decided to relax the conditions regarding the declaration of FASTag fee lanes for 30 days from 15th January 2020 at only 65 fee plazas of NHAI so that citizens are not put into inconvenience.
 - These 65 fee plazas have been allowed to operate up to 25 per cent of all fee lanes as hybrid (cash plus FASTag) lanes during this period.
 - For rest of the fee plazas, the system has been implemented as per mandate.
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9. Jal Marg Vikas Project

Context:

Use of Waterways for Reducing Cost of Transportation.

Details:

For more on the [Jal Mark Vikas Project](#), click on the linked article.

10. Skill India and Start-Up India

Context:

The Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship talked about the above schemes in the Lok Sabha.

Details:

Click on the links below to know more about the schemes.

Skill India	Start-Up India
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11. Uranium Contamination in Ground Water

Details:

- There is a prevalence of Uranium concentration above 30 micro-gram per litre (World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) provisional guidelines) in some of the localized pockets of a few States/UTs in the country.
- A report brought out by Duke University, USA in association with the Central Ground Water Board and State Ground Water departments states that Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir have localised occurrence of Uranium concentration.
- As per the Department of Atomic Energy, elevated uranium levels in drinking water may affect human health.
- Health studies carried out elsewhere in the world suggest that elevated uranium levels in drinking water may be associated with kidney toxicity.
- Further, several studies focusing on health effects have been carried out in Finland among people who use their drilled wells as sources of drinking water having uranium concentrations in the range 5.6 – 3410 ppb. However, no clear clinical symptoms have been observed among the exposed population.
- The Indian Standard IS 10500: 2012 for Drinking Water specification has specified the maximum acceptable limits for radioactive residues as alpha and beta emitters, values in excess of which render the water not suitable. These requirements take into account all radioactive elements including uranium. No individual radioactive elements have been specifically identified.
- Further, as per information provided by the Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS), they are working to incorporate maximum permissible limit of Uranium as 0.03 mg/l (as per WHO provisional guidelines) in all drinking water standards after following the due process.

Context:

The above information was given by the Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti in the Rajya Sabha.

