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Chief of Defence Staff

Context:

Cabinet approves the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff in the rank of a **four-star General**.

Details:

- The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) will also head the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)**, to be created within the Ministry of Defence and function as its Secretary.
- The following areas will be dealt with by the Department of Military Affairs headed by CDS:
  - The Armed Forces of the Union, namely, the Army, the Navy and the Air Force.
  - Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence comprising Army Headquarters, Naval Headquarters, Air Headquarters and Defence Staff Headquarters.
  - The Territorial Army.
  - Works relating to the Army, the Navy and the Air Force.
  - Procurement exclusive to the Services except capital acquisitions, as per prevalent rules and procedures.
- Apart from the above, the **mandate of the Department of Military Affairs** will include the following areas:
  - Promoting jointness in procurement, training and staffing for the Services through joint planning and integration of their requirements.
  - Facilitation of restructuring of Military Commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through the establishment of joint/theatre commands.
  - Promoting the use of indigenous equipment by the Services.
- The Chief of Defence Staff, apart from being the head of the Department of Military Affairs, will also be the **Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee**.
- He will act as the **Principal Military Adviser to Raksha Mantri** (RM) on all tri-Services matters.
- The three Chiefs will continue to advise RM on matters exclusively concerning their respective Services.
- The CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three Service Chiefs, so as to be able to provide impartial advice to the political leadership.

- As the Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee, CDS will perform the following functions:
    - The CDS will administer tri-services organisations.
    - Tri-service agencies/organisations/commands related to Cyber and Space will be under the command of the CDS.
- The CDS will be a member of the Defence Acquisition Council chaired by Raksha Mantri and the Defence Planning Committee chaired by the National Security Advisor (NSA).
- The CDS will also function as the **Military Adviser to the Nuclear Command Authority**.
- The position will bring about jointness in operation, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance, etc. of the three Services, within three years of the first CDS assuming office.
- It will also ensure optimal utilisation of infrastructure and rationalise it through jointness among the services.
- Another mandate is to bring about reforms in the functioning of the three Services aimed at augmenting combat capabilities of the Armed Forces by reducing wasteful expenditure.

Read more about the CDS and its announcement in CNA dated August 16, 2019.

Security Cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia

Context:

Cabinet approves ex-post facto agreement on Security Cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia.

Cabinet also approves the MoU between India and Saudi Arabia for cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy.

Details:

- The Union Cabinet has given ex-post facto approval on an **Agreement on Security Cooperation** between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that was signed on 29th October 2019.
- The Agreement aims to improve the effectiveness of both countries in the prevention and suppression of crimes including crime relating to terrorism and its financing and organised crime, and to establish a framework for enhancing cooperation between the officials of intelligence and law-enforcement agencies of the two countries, in line with national and international obligations.
- The **MoU in the field of renewable energy** sets up a framework for cooperation between the two parties in the field of renewable energy.
- For more on this agreement and the MoU, check PIB dated October 29, 2019 under the headline, "Strategic Partnership Council by India and Saudi Arabia".

MoU between India and Bangladesh on cooperation in youth matters

Context:

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Bangladesh on cooperation in youth matters.

Details:

- The said MoU was signed between both countries on 5th Oct, 2019.
- Exchange programmes in the field of youth affairs between India and Bangladesh will help in promoting the exchange of ideas, values and culture amongst youth and in consolidating friendly relations.
- It will help in developing an international perspective among the youth and expanding their knowledge and expertise in the areas of youth affairs.
- For more on this MoU, check PIB dated 5th Oct 2019.

Agreement between India and Uzbekistan

Context:

Cabinet approves ex-post facto the agreement between India and Uzbekistan on Cooperation in the field of Combating Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism.

Details:

- The cabinet approved this agreement that was signed between both countries in November 2019.
- The agreement aims to improve the effectiveness of both countries in the prevention and suppression of crimes including crime relating to terrorism and its financing, organised crime and to establish a framework for enhancing cooperation between the officials of intelligence and law-enforcement agencies of the two countries, in line with domestic laws and international obligations.

Promulgation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019

Context:

The Union Cabinet approved a proposal to promulgate an ordinance and to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

Details:

- The Amendment will remove certain ambiguities in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 and ensure smooth implementation of the Code.
- Under the Amendments, the liability of a corporate debtor for an offence committed prior to the commencement of the corporate insolvency resolution process shall cease, and the corporate debtor shall not be prosecuted for such an offence from the date the resolution plan has been approved by the Adjudicating Authority, if the resolution plan results in the change in the management or control of the corporate debtor to a person who was not:
    - A promoter or in the management or control of the corporate debtor or a related party of such a person; or
    - A person with regard to whom the relevant investigating authority has, on the basis of material in its possession, reason to believe that he had abetted or conspired for the commission of the offence, and has submitted or filed a report or a complaint to the relevant

statutory authority or Court.
- Subject to relevant provisions the corporate debtor shall, as required, extend all assistance and cooperation to any authority investigating an offence committed prior to the commencement of the corporate insolvency resolution process.

For more on the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, click on the linked article.

MoU between India and Brazil on Bioenergy Cooperation

Context:

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the signing of Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of India and the Federative Republic of Brazil on Bioenergy Cooperation.

Background:

- India and Brazil are major consumers of energy in the world.
- Brazil is one of the most important trading partners of India in the entire LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) region.
- Brazil is currently the world's second-largest producer and consumer of biofuels. Biofuels and bioelectricity accounted for 18% of Brazil's energy mix.
- India also has a strong focus in the area of biofuels and has set a target to achieve 20% blending of ethanol in petrol and 5% blending of biodiesel in diesel by 2030 with the announcement of the new policy on Biofuels in 2018.

About the MoU:

- The MoU provides a framework to cooperate and promote investment in biofuel, bioelectricity and biogas supply-chains, including feedstock, industrial conversion, distribution and end-use sectors.
- Other important features of the MoU are:
    - Exchange of information on agricultural practices.
    - Policies regarding biomass for bioenergy, including sugarcane, corn, rice, oil-crops, and lignocellulosic crops. [Lignocellulose refers to plant dry matter (biomass)].
    - Policies for reducing greenhouse gas emission levels based on the use of biofuels.
    - Using cycle analysis and the issuance of emissions reduction certificates traded in an organised market.
    - Trade aspects and the promotion of a joint position to address market access and sustainability of biofuels, including advanced biofuels.
    - Engine and fuel modifications/adjustments that may be necessary for different percentages of biofuels blended with fossil fuels.

Also read: Focus on Biofuel – RSTV: In Depth

Cabinet grants Ex-post facto approval to amend the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations

Context:

The Union Cabinet gave its ex-post facto approval to the Adaptation of Laws (Amendment) Order, 2019 issued by the President of India under clause (2) of Article 372 of the Constitution to amend the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations (BEFR), 1873.

Details:

- The **notification will extend BEFR to the State of Manipur** to give its indigenous people protection from the provisions of Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 and make necessary changes in the said Regulation.

About the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873:

- This regulation introduced the Inner Line Permit (ILP) concept. (The ILP regulates visit of Indians to States where ILP regime is prevalent under Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.)
- The Regulation protected the British Crown's interest in the tea, oil and elephant trade by prohibiting "British subjects" from entering into these "Protected Areas" (to prevent them from establishing any commercial venture that could rival the Crown's agents).
- The word "British subjects" was replaced by "Citizens of India" in 1950.
- In terms of Section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873, the Inner Line Permit system is prevalent in the three North Eastern States, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. Citizens of other States require ILP for visiting these three States.
- The main aim of the ILP system is to prevent settlement of other Indian nationals in the States where the ILP regime is prevalent, in order to protect the indigenous/tribal population.

For more on this, check CNA dated Dec 15, 2019.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

Context:

The Cabinet approves the release of funds for 10 projects of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme sanctioned in 2018-19.

About the Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- The scheme was launched by the Union Tourism Ministry with the objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in India.
- These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.
- The scheme was launched in 2015.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme (which means 100% sponsored by the GOI).
- Under the Scheme **15 circuits** have been identified for development namely Himalayan Circuit, North East Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Buddhist Circuit and Coastal Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Tirthankar Circuit and Sufi Circuit.
- **Objectives of the scheme:**
  - To position tourism as a major engine of economic growth and job creation.
  - Develop circuits having tourist potential in a planned and prioritized manner.

- Promote cultural and heritage value of the country to generate livelihoods in the identified regions.
- Enhancing the tourist attractiveness in a sustainable manner by developing world-class infrastructure in the circuit/destinations.
- Follow community-based development and pro-poor tourism approach.
- Creating awareness among the local communities about the importance of tourism for them in terms of increased sources of income, improved living standards and overall development of the area.
- To create employment through the active involvement of local communities.
- Harness tourism potential for its effects on employment generation and economic development.
- To make full use of the potential and advantages in terms of available infrastructure, national culture and characteristic strong points of each and every region throughout the country by the development of theme-based circuits.
- Development of tourist facilitation services to enhance visitor experience/satisfaction.

What is a Tourist Circuit?

- A Tourist Circuit is defined as a route having at least three major tourist destinations which are distinct and apart.
- Circuits should have well-defined entry and exit points. A tourist who enters should get motivated to visit most of the places identified in the circuit.
- A Circuit could be confined to a State or could be a regional circuit covering more than one State/Union Territory. These circuits may have one dominant theme and other sub-themes.

Transformational Organisational Restructuring of Indian Railways

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved a transformational organisational restructuring of the Indian Railways.

The major reforms include:

- Unification of the existing eight Group A services of the Railways into a Central Service called **Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS).**
    - Unification of services will end the prevailing 'departmentalism', promote smooth working of Railways, expedite decision-making, create a coherent vision for the organisation and promote rational decision-making.
    - Unification of services has been recommended by various committees for reforming Railways including – the Prakash Tandon Committee (1994), Rakesh Mohan Committee (2001), Sam Pitroda Committee (2012) and Bibek Debroy Committee (2015).
    - Creation of the new service IRMS will be done in consultation with the Department of Personnel and Training and the UPSC to facilitate recruitment in the next recruitment year. It will enable Railways to recruit engineers/non-engineers as per need, and offer equality of opportunity to both categories in career progression.
- Re-organisation of the Railway Board on functional lines headed by CRB (Railway Board Chairman) with four Members and some Independent Members.
    - Railway Board will no longer be organised on departmental lines, and replaced with a leaner

structure organised on functional lines.

- It will have a Chairman, who will act as 'Chief Executive Officer (CEO)' along with 4 Members responsible for Infrastructure, Operations & Business Development, Rolling Stock and Finance respectively.
- The existing service of Indian Railway Medical Service (IRMS) to be consequently renamed as **Indian Railway Health Service (IRHS).**

Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Context:

Cabinet approves official amendments to the Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Details:

The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha in December 2019. For more on this, check PIB dated 9 Dec 2019.

National Board of Examinations (NBE)

Context:

The Union Health Minister presided over the 20th Convocation of the National Board of Examinations.

About the National Board of Examinations (NBE):

- It is an autonomous organisation of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, set up to conduct high level and uniform standard Post Graduate and Post-Doctoral examinations in the field of Modern Medicine and Allied Sciences.
- NBE awards Diplomate of National Board (DNB) qualifications to Doctors who have completed and have qualified the three years DNB course and Fellowships to Doctors who have completed and have qualified the two years DNB course in respective medical specialities.
- NBE conducts 82 DNB broad specialities, super specialities and fellowship programs in sub-specialities across the country and conducts examination for it twice in a year.

Year End Review- 2019: Ministry Of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

The Year-End Review of the Ministry of MSME (schemes and achievements):

- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
- **Cluster Development Programmes:**
  - **Micro Small Enterprises – Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP)**
    - A cluster is a group of enterprises located within an identifiable and as far as practicable, contiguous area or a value chain that goes beyond a geographical area

and producing same/similar products/complementary products/services, which can be linked together by common physical infrastructure facilities that help address their common challenges.

- One of the major objectives of this scheme is to support the sustainability and growth of MSEs by addressing common issues such as improvement of technology, skills & quality, market access, etc.
- It also envisages setting up of Common Facility Centres (for testing, training, raw material depot, effluent treatment, complementing production processes, etc.).

- **SFURTI Clusters**
  - SFURTI is Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries.
  - This scheme has been under implementation since 2005-06 for making Traditional Industries more productive, market-driven and competitive by organizing the Traditional Industries and artisans into clusters.
  - The Scheme envisages providing need-based assistance for replacement of production equipment, setting up of Common Facility Centres (CFC), product development, quality improvement, improved marketing, training and capacity building, etc. with the financial assistance extended by the Government.

- **Solar Charkha Clusters**
  - Under Mission Solar Charkha, each spinner will be given two charkhas of 10 spindles each. On an average, it is considered that such clusters will have about 1000 charkhas.
  - A cluster with full capacity will provide direct employment to 2042 artisans.

- **Credit Link Capital Subsidy Re-Launched**
  - The Government approved for continuation of Credit Linked Capital Subsidy component under Credit Linked Capital Subsidy-Technology Upgradation Scheme (CLCS-TUS) in February 2019.
  - Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) was set up.

- **Technology Centre Systems Programme (TCSP)**
  - This is being implemented to establish 15 new Tool Rooms and Technology Development Centres (TCs) and upgrade the existing 18 TCs across the country.

- **GeM – Government e-Marketplace**
  - It is the national public procurement portal offering end to end solutions for all procurement needs of Central and State Government Departments, PSUs, autonomous institutions and local bodies.
  - Since its launch in 2016, it has transformed public procurement in the country by leveraging technology and making procurement contactless, paperless, and cashless.
  - GeM has more than 15 lakh products and around 20,000 services, more than 3 lakh registered sellers and service providers and more than 40,000 government buyer organizations.
  - State Departments and organisations, and public sector enterprises (PSEs) have been using GeM for their buying needs. Sellers from the States are also benefiting through access to the national public procurement market using the portal.
  - GeM's vision is "to affect an evolution in public procurement promoting a transparent, efficient and inclusive marketplace."

- Incubation centres have been approved for more than 200 Technical Institutions, Industry Associations and Social Enterprises. Innovative ideas having business proposals are being invited from them for funding support under the scheme. Seed capital up to Rs. 1 crore has been provided to start up entrepreneurs under the scheme.
- **Design Clinic:** Design scheme opened for different technical institutions under Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Industry Associations, Social Enterprises, Self Help Groups working

on providing design support to MSME entrepreneurs including rural and art based enterprises.
  - Also read about the India Design Council on PIB dated 12 Dec 2019.
- Financial Support to MSMEs in **Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) Certification Scheme**
  - The ZED scheme is an integrated and comprehensive certification system that will account for productivity, quality, pollution mitigation, energy efficiency, financial status, human resource and technological depth including design and IPR in both products and processes.
  - This scheme is an extensive drive to create proper awareness in MSMEs about the Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) manufacturing and motivate the entrepreneur for assessment of their enterprises for ZED and support them.
- Building Awareness on **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)**
- Procurement and marketing support through the **District Udyam Samaagams**.
- **Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programme (ESDP)**
  - ESDPs are being organised regularly to nurture the talent of youth by enlightening them on various aspects of industrial activity required for setting up MSEs.
- **Popularising Khadi and Empowering Village Industries**
  - Government is taking steps in this regard to promote the **export of khadi products**.
  - Khadi has got a **unique HS code** issued by the central government in Nov 2019 to categorise its products in export.

SDG India Index & Dashboard 2019–20

Context:

NITI Aayog will launch the second edition of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index**, which documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards implementing the 2030 SDG targets.

Details:

- The SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019–20 have been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the United Nations in India, and the Global Green Growth Institute.
- NITI Aayog has the mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs in the country, at the national and sub-national level.
- **The SDG India Index, whose first edition was launched in December 2018, was the first tool developed by any large country to monitor the progress towards achieving SDGs at the sub-national level.**
- The SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019 tracks the progress of and ranks all States and UTs on 100 indicators drawn from MoSPI's National Indicator Framework, comprising 306 indicators.
- It indicates where the country and its States and UTs currently are on SDG implementation, and charts the distance to be travelled to reach the SDG targets.
- The Index covers 16 out of 17 SDGs and a qualitative assessment on Goal 17. This marks an improvement over the 2018 Index, which covered only 13 goals.

December 24th, 2019 PIB:- Download PDF Here