

My Notes....

NATIONAL

NATIONAL HEALTH INDEX 2019

The 2nd edition of National Health Index 2019 report titled “Healthy States, Progressive India: Report on Rank of States and UTs” was released by NITI Aayog. The report has been prepared in collaboration with Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare along with **technical assistance from World Bank**. The current edition of health index accounts for **base year of 2015-16** and **reference year of 2017-18**. The ranking was done under 3 categories (**Larger states, Smaller States and Union territories**) so as to ensure comparison among similar entities

What

1. **Kerala** has emerged as top ranking state in **larger states categories** while **Andhra Pradesh** and **Maharashtra** emerged as **2nd and 3rd best states** in terms of overall health performance respectively. **UP and Bihar, finished at bottom of List.**
2. **Bihar occupied 2nd last position** in ranking of **21 large states** while UP stayed static at bottom of rankings.
3. **Mizoram was ranked 1st in smaller states** followed by Manipur on overall performance. **While Tripura followed by Manipur** was ranked top two states in terms of annual incremental performance.
4. Sikkim and Arunchal Pradesh had biggest decrease in overall Health Index scores.
5. **Chandigarh ranked 1st** in overall performance of Health India in Union territories (UTs) categories, while Dadra and Nagar Haveli improved most among UT's.
6. Sikkim and Arunchal Pradesh had biggest decrease in overall Health Index scores.

Background

1. The **1st edition of Health Index** was released in February 2018.
2. It measured **annual and incremental performances of states and UTs** for base year of 2014-15 to reference year of 2015-16.
3. **Health Index is a composite score incorporating 23 indicators** covering key aspects of health sector performance, grouped into domains of **Health Outcomes, Governance and Information, and Key Inputs/Processes**.
4. Health Index has been developed as a **tool to leverage co-operative and competitive federalism** to accelerate the pace of achieving health outcomes.
5. It would also serve as an **instrument for “nudging” States & Union Territories (UTs)** and the Central Ministries to a much greater focus on output and outcome based measurement of annual performance than is currently the practice.

Objectives

1. To **develop a composite Health Index** based on key health outcomes and other health systems and service delivery indicators.
2. To ensure States' participation and ownership through Health Index data submission on a web-based portal with requested mentor support.
3. **To build transparency through independent validation of data** by an independent agency

- To generate Health Index scores and rankings for different categories of the States and UTs based on year-to-year progress (annual incremental performance) and overall performance.

EQUIP FINALISED AND RELEASED

In accordance with the decision of the Prime Minister for finalizing a **five-year vision plan** for each Ministry, **the Department of Higher Education** of HRD Ministry has finalized and released a **five-year vision plan** named **Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP)**. This report has been prepared after a detailed exercise done by the Experts. The **ten Expert Groups** drawn from senior academicians, administrators and industrialists, have **suggested more than 50 initiatives** that would transform the **higher education sector completely**. The Groups have set the following goals for higher education sector:

- Double the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education** and resolve the geographically and socially skewed access to higher education institutions in India
- Upgrade the quality of education to global standards
- Position at least 50 Indian institutions among the top-1000 global universities
- Introduce governance reforms in higher education** for well-administered campuses
- Accreditation of all institutions as an assurance of quality
- Promote Research & Innovation ecosystems for positioning India in the Top-3 countries in the world in matters of knowledge creation
- Double the employability of the students passing out of higher education
- Harness education technology for expanding the reach and improving pedagogy
- Promote India as a global study destination
- Achieve a quantum increase in investment in higher education

DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON DOMESTIC WORKERS

A **draft National Policy on domestic workers** is under consideration of the Central Government. The **salient features** of the draft policy areas under:-

- Inclusion of Domestic Workers** in the existing legislations
- Domestic workers will have the right to register as workers. Such registration will facilitate their access to rights & benefits accruing to them as workers.
- Right to form their own associations, trade unions
- Right to have minimum wages, access to social security, protection from abuse, harassment, violence

Flashpoint

- The Central Government has enacted the **Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008** for providing social security to all unorganized workers including domestic workers.
- The Act **provides formulation of social security schemes viz. life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits & old age protection** by the central Government.
- The state Government are mandated under the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 to formulate suitable welfare schemes for unorganized sector workers including domestic workers relating to provident fund, employment injury benefits housing, education schemes for children, skill up gradation of workers, financial assistance & old age homes.

5. **Right to enhance their professional skills**
6. Protection of Domestic Workers from abuse and exploitation
7. Domestic Workers to have access to courts, tribunals, etc.
8. Establishment of a mechanism for regulation of concerned placement agencies

DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The government has prepared a **draft national policy for women empowerment** with a **priority on their education, food security and nutrition**. The Women and Child Development Ministry has prepared the draft policy after receiving suggestions from various stakeholders.

What

1. **The draft policy identifies the priority areas of food security, nutrition, education, economy** (including agriculture industry, labour, employment, NRI women, service sector, science and technology), Violence against women, governance and decision making.
2. According to the draft policy, **it aims to create an enabling environment for women** through housing, shelter and infrastructure, drinking water and sanitation, media and culture, sports and social security.
3. It states that it aims to empower women and envisions a society in which, women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all spheres of life.
4. The draft policy also has **provisions to promote environmental friendly, renewable, conventional energy, green energy** sources for women in rural households.
5. It also has provisions for addressing all forms of violence against women and preventing trafficking at source, transit and destinations.

INTERNATIONAL

OSAKA DECLARATION

At the end of **hectic negotiations between G-20 countries** which went on till 5 am on 29 June 2019, the **Osaka declaration stressed on economic offenders** as part of the **anti-corruption theme** — portrayed as a priority for the Indian government. While the joint statement gave very low priority to terrorism, **the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) got due prominence**. In the **43-paragraph joint statement negotiated under the presidency of Japan**, the US — though isolated on climate change for the last two summits since its withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement — was able to muscle its way to get its position reflected in the G-20 statement for the first time.

What

1. **India's primary concern on terrorism was not given due prominence at G-20 this year**. But its concerns on **black money, cross-border flow of data, BRI and importance of FATF** were given due importance.
2. On the issue of **"quality infrastructure"**, the declaration gave prominence to **"sustainability of public finances"**, taking into account **"environmental and social" factors** — all pointing towards China's Belt and Road Initiative. Quality infrastructure has become a euphemism for a critique of the BRI at the Osaka summit.
3. **On terrorism, the Osaka declaration gave primacy to the FATF**: "We welcome the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2462, which stresses the essential role of

- the FATF in setting global standards for preventing and combatting money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing.
4. **In the Buenos Aires declaration in December 2018**, the paragraph on terrorism was much stronger: **We reaffirm our strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations**. We commit to the full implementation of **The Hamburg G20 Leaders Statement on Countering Terrorism**.
 5. **Titled “anti-corruption”, Paragraph 20 of the Osaka declaration** said they would work on a scoping paper on international cooperation dealing with **“serious economic offenders”** and recovery of stolen assets — this has been portrayed by the Indian government as a priority objective.
 6. **The 2018 declaration had just said that they would further explore the links between corruption and other economic crimes** and ways to tackle them, including through “cooperation on the return of persons sought for such offences and stolen assets. But they had called for effective implementation by all G-20 countries of the UN Convention Against Corruption, including criminalisation of the bribery of foreign public officials.
 7. **On climate change, Washington was able to get a paragraph to enunciate its position**. The US reiterates its decision to **withdraw from the Paris Agreement** because it disadvantages American workers and taxpayers.
 8. **On climate change**, the G-20 statement said: **“Signatories to the Paris Agreement, who confirmed at Buenos Aires its irreversibility and are determined to implement it**, reaffirm their commitment to its full implementation, reflecting common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.
 9. **In the Buenos Aires communique**, the US had said that it reiterates its decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, and affirms its strong commitment to economic growth and energy access and security, utilising all energy sources and technologies, while protecting the environment.
 10. **In the Hamburg communique in 2017**, the G-20 had said: **“We take note of the decision of the United States of America to withdraw from the Paris Agreement**. The leaders of the other G-20 members state that the Paris Agreement is irreversible.”
 11. **Cross-border data flow became a hot-button issue in Osaka**, as India on 28 June 2019 **refused to become a signatory to the declaration on digital economy** that was signed by 24 countries and groupings.
 12. The issue figured prominently in the Osaka declaration. **“As digitalisation is transforming every aspect of our economies and societies**, we recognise the critical role played by effective use of data, as an enabler of economic growth, development and social well-being. We aim to promote international policy discussions to harness the full potential of data,” it said.
 13. **On quality infrastructure** — which was put on the agenda by Japan — the G-20 statement said: “We stress the importance of maximising the positive impact of infrastructure to achieve sustainable growth and development while preserving the sustainability of public finances, raising economic efficiency in view of lifecycle cost,

Flashpoint

1. **India, South Africa and Indonesia** among others chose not to sign the declaration on Osaka Track because **it would undermine the core WTO principles** for arriving at **consensus-based decisions**
2. Japan attempts to legitimize the informal plurilateral negotiations on digital trade that were never approved at the WTO

integrating environmental and social considerations, including women's economic empowerment, building resilience against natural disasters and other risks, and strengthening infrastructure governance."

14. The criticism against the **Chinese initiative, BRI**, includes unsustainable financing and poor environmental considerations.

INDIA ABSTAIN UN RESOLUTION ON TORTURE

India joined ranks with Russia and 42 other nations to **abstain from voting on a General Assembly resolution** aimed at **examining options to end trade in goods used for capital punishment and torture**, saying it is unacceptable to place death penalty on par with torture. The **193-member UN General Assembly** on 28 June 2019 adopted the resolution towards torture-free trade: examining the feasibility, scope and parameters for possible common international standards' by a recorded vote of 81 in favour to 20 against, with 44 abstentions.

What

1. **India abstained from voting on the resolution**, with **First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Paulomi Tripathi**, in the explanation of vote, noting that incorporating capital punishment into the scope of this resolution "raises concerns that it may be an attempt to place it on par with torture.
2. She stressed that **India remains firmly committed to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment**. We firmly believe that freedom from torture is a human right which must be respected and protected under all circumstances. She asserted that India strongly believes that torture is a crime and "therefore, unlawful. On the other hand, in countries where capital punishment is statutorily provided for, it is "exercised after following the due process of law.
3. Every state has the sovereign right to determine its own legal system and appropriate legal penalties Any implication that capital punishment is being treated on par with torture is unacceptable to my delegation, as in India capital punishment is a statutory provision, even though it is used in the rarest of rare cases.
4. In view of these substantive and procedural inconsistencies India was not able to support the resolution and abstained during the voting. Tripathi further stated that the present draft resolution seeks to establish a link between trade in goods and the criminal acts of torture.
5. **It is apparent that the multilateral trade system is already under stress**. In such a situation, attempts at trade restrictions in a selective manner, as proposed by the resolution, is likely to raise further concerns regarding implications on the international trading system.
6. Further, before starting a process of this nature, the obligations undertaken by different countries under the World Trade Organization and other forums also needs to be carefully looked into, Tripathi said expressing concern that the current process has not afforded any such opportunity for the Member States.
7. The subject matter of torture will be given full consideration by UN Member States in the forthcoming General Assembly session and this will include a range of appropriate measures to be taken to prevent and prohibit the production, trade, export, import and use of equipment that has no practical use other than for the purpose of torture.

OUTLINES PLAN TO COUNTER BRI

India has outlined its **rebalancing strategy to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, highlighting its offer of soft loans for several development and capacity

building projects across continents. India has a robust development cooperation agenda, constituting a significant dimension of its close and multifaceted ties with many partner countries, including in **India's neighbourhood**, said V Muraleedharan, the minister of state for external affairs, while expressing strong reservations against the BRI and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

What

1. **“Extension of Government of India (GoI) Lines of Credit (LoCs)** on concessional terms is an important component of this development partnership in diverse areas of socio-economic development such as power, transport, connectivity, agriculture and irrigation, manufacturing industries, water and sanitation, healthcare, the minister said.
2. As part of the GoI LoC programme, 279 LoCs have been extended to 63 countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, **Oceania and Commonwealth of Independent States** worth nearly \$28 billion.
3. Of this, 254 projects aggregating nearly \$4.70 billion have been completed, while 194 projects worth nearly \$19 billion are under implementation. These include 94 connectivity projects in five countries in India's immediate neighbourhood that are being taken up with GoI LoCs worth nearly \$6.6 billion, he informed the House.
4. Interestingly, there was no mention of any **Indo-Japan bilateral project in the Indo-Pacific region** or the proposed trilateral cooperation involving India-Japan-USA or any proposed Quadrilateral (India-Japan-USA-Australia) aimed at rebalancing the BRI.
5. Referring to the government's position on **China's 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) or BRI**, the minister emphasised this has been clear and consistent.
6. The inclusion of the so-called 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor', which passes through parts of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir under illegal occupation of Pakistan, as a flagship project of 'OBOR/BRI', reflects lack of appreciation of India's concerns on the issue of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The government has conveyed to the Chinese side its concerns.

Flashback

1. The **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** is a **global development strategy** adopted by the Chinese government in **2013** involving infrastructure development and investments in 152 countries and international organizations in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas.
2. **"Belt" refers to the overland routes for road and rail transportation**, called "the Silk Road Economic Belt"; whereas **"road" refers to the sea routes**, or the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.
3. It was known as the **One Belt One Road (OBOR)** and the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road until 2016 when the Chinese government considered the emphasis on the word "one" was prone to misinterpretation.

OPERATION SUNSHINE-2

In a coordinated military operation conducted by the armies of India and Myanmar on their respective sides of the border, several camps of Northeast-based militant groups inside Myanmar territory were destroyed, and fleeing militants apprehended by Indian security forces. **Called 'Operation Sunshine-2'**, the military action that took place between May 16 and June 8, is expected to give a debilitating jolt to insurgencies in the Northeastern states.

What

1. **The operation included blocks by two battalions of the Indian Army** — along with Special Forces, **Assam Rifles and infantry Ghataks** — on the Indian side of the border while clearance action was taken by four brigades of the Myanmar Army.
2. This was a follow-up to **'Operation Sunshine-1' from February 22 to 26**, when the Indian Army had acted against suspected Arakanese rebel camps inside Indian territory, and fleeing Arakenese rebels were arrested by the Myanmar Army on their side.
3. Around 70-80 militants, who were apprehended by the Indian Army in **Operation Sunshine-2**, have all been handed over to local police forces.
4. The operation “was coordinated at a military level” and “possible due to trust generated between the two armies by Operation Sunshine-1”.
5. The military operation was coordinated between the Indian Army’s 3 Corps and the North West Army Command of the Myanmar Army.
6. **The joint operation was first flagged on May 27 by the NSCN(K)**, when it issued a statement claiming that a “war-like situation” had been created in the Naga-inhabited region as a result of the “joint political and military operation” by Myanmar and India.

UN PLAN TO COMBAT HATE SPEECH

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is launching a **plan to combat hate speech** and counter what he calls “a groundswell of xenophobia, racism and intolerance, violent misogyny, anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred” around the world.

What

1. The U.N. chief told diplomats launch that “over the past 75 years, hate speech has been a precursor to atrocity crimes, including genocide, from Rwanda to Bosnia to Cambodia.”
2. But in the digital era, he said, **“hate-filled content is reaching new audiences** at lightning speed and has been linked with violence and killings from Sri Lanka to New Zealand and the United States.”
3. Guterres said the plan aims to coordinate efforts across the U.N.’s far-flung system to confront hate speech and includes ways to engage governments, business, civil society and others to take action.

Flashback

1. The **United Nations (UN)** is an **intergovernmental organization** tasked with maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, achieving international co-operation, and being a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.
2. **It was established after World War II**, with the aim of preventing future wars, and succeeded the ineffective League of Nations.
3. Its headquarters, which are subject to extraterritoriality, are in **Manhattan, New York City**, and it has other main offices in **Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna and The Hague**.

SRI LANKA LAUNCHES ITS FIRST SATELLITE

Sri Lanka’s first satellite ‘Ravana-1’, designed and developed by two local engineers, was successfully launched into orbit this week from the **International Space Station (ISS)** along with **two other BIRDS 3 satellites from Japan and Nepal**. **Ravana 1**, the cube satellite measuring 11.3 cm x 10 cm x 10 cm, and weighing around 1.05 kg, was launched into orbit.

What

1. **The satellite was designed and developed by two Sri Lankan engineers** – Tharindu Dayaratne and Dulani Chamika – studying space engineering at Japan’s Kyushu Institute of Technology.
2. **Ravana-1 was deployed to the 400-km of orbit at an inclination of 51.6 degrees** using the JAXA (Japanese Aerospace and Exploration Agency) owned Kibo experiment module.
3. The satellite was officially handed over to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency on February 18 and was sent to the ISS on April 17, through the assistance of Cygnus-1 spacecraft from the US.
4. **Ravana-1 is expected to fulfil five missions including the capturing of pictures of Sri Lanka and surrounding regions**, active attitude stabilization which ensures that satellite’s attitude is stable under the influence of external talks.
5. It will have a minimum lifespan of one and a half years but was expected to be active for up to **five years**.

INDIA-PAKISTAN CLASH OVER NIZAM

A decades-old legal dispute between India and Pakistan over around **£35 million belonging to the Nizam of Hyderabad** at the **time of Partition** and deposited in a **London bank account** has reached an important stage in the U.K. High Court. **The Nizam’s descendants, Prince Mukarram Jah** — the **titular eighth Nizam of Hyderabad** — and his **younger brother Muffakham Jah**, have joined hands with the Indian government in the legal battle against the Pakistan government over the funds lying with the NatWest Bank plc in London.

What

1. The dispute revolves around **1,007,940 pounds and nine shillings that were transferred in 1948 from the then Nizam of Hyderabad, Osman Ali Khan**, to the High Commissioner in Britain of the newly-formed Pakistan. That amount has since grown into millions.
2. His Exalted Highness Nizam VIII and his younger brother have waited decades to receive what their grandfather gifted them.
3. **Pakistan has blocked access for 70 years** and we hope the recent trial will mean a final resolution at last, said Paul Hewitt, partner at Withers law firm, which is representing the eight Nizam in the Royal Courts of Justice in London.
4. Justice Marcus Smith has been presented with arguments from both sides in the case listed as — The High Commissioner for Pakistan in the U.K. versus seven others, including the Union of India and the President of India. The judgment is expected in six weeks.
5. The late Nizam Osman Ali Khan, who faced the quandary of joining Pakistan or staying with India at the time of the funds transfer back in 1948, had later reportedly sought the return of the funds.
6. **NatWest Bank** has since held on to the funds deposited into the account of then Pakistan High Commissioner Habib Ibrahim Rahimtoola in safekeeping until its rightful legal owner is established.

ECONOMY

UK SINHA PANEL SUBMIT REPORT

The Reserve Bank has said the **expert committee on the MSME sector**, set up in January under the chairmanship of former chairman of **Sebi UK Sinha**, has submitted its report to the governor Shaktikanta Das. The **eight-member committee** was set up to **review the framework for the micro, small and medium enterprises**, and **suggest long-term solutions for the economic and financial sustainability** for the sector also to study the impact of the recent economic reforms on the sector and identify the structural problems impacting its growth.

What

1. The committee held its deliberations including consultations with various stakeholders and has submitted its report to the governor.
2. The central bank has not shared the report. One of the objectives of the panel was to examine the factors affecting the timely and adequate availability of finance to MSMEs.
3. The members of the committee included development commissioner for MSME Ram Mohan Mishra; joint secretary at the department of financial services Pankaj Jain; SBI managing director PK Gupta; ICICI Bank executive director Anup Bagchi; IIM-Ahmedabad professor Abhiman Das; Ispirit Foundation founder Sharad Sharma and Dvara Trust chairperson Bindu Ananth.
4. **India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** base is the largest in the world after China.
5. The sector provides a wide range of services and is engaged in the manufacturing of over 6,000 products – ranging from traditional to hi-tech items.
6. Given the government of India's latest 'Make in India' push, along with a significant jump in the FDI flows, the Indian MSMEs sector is poised for rapid growth and integration with major global value chains.
7. The **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006**, governs the coverage and investment ceiling of MSMEs in India.
8. According to the Act, there are **two categories of MSMEs** in the country – **manufacturing and services**.

35TH GST COUNCIL MEETING

35th GST Council Meeting was held in Delhi on 21 June 2019 under the chairmanship of Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman. This was the first meeting of the Council after the swearing in of the new Government.

What

1. Altogether, **12 Agenda items** were discussed during the Council meeting. Some of these items were of regular nature like confirmation of the Minutes of the 34th GST Council Meeting, deemed ratification by the Council of notifications, circulars and orders issued by the Central Government between 12th March, 2019 and 11th June, 2019, taking note of the decisions of GST Implementation Committee, etc.
2. The Council took a decision **regarding location of the State and the Area Benches for the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)** for various States and Union Territories with legislature. It has been decided to have a **common State Bench** for the States of **Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh**.
3. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council **extended the tenure of the anti-profiteering authority by two years** to November 2021, in what went against its

- past assertions that the body will have only a transient existence and a non-intrusive character.
4. The council also decided that in cases of profiteering, **firms will have to pay a penalty of 10% of the amount cornered by not passing on benefits of GST rate cuts to consumers.** It, however, deferred a plan to reduce **tax reliefs for vehicles (EVs)** and sent the proposals in this regard to its fitment committee.
 5. The **council extended by two months the last date for filing annual returns and audit forms** (GSTR-9, 9A and 9C) for 2017-18 to August 31, 2019.
 6. The proposed simplified return-filing mechanism **would be mandatory for businesses with turnover above Rs 5 crore from October**, while it would be rolled out for all by January 1, 2020.
 7. The council also approved the implementation of **electronic invoicing for B2B transactions.** The mechanism is designed to allow taxpayers to generate invoice at the central portal, which will eventually act as e-way bill too.
 8. Further, collection of invoices on the portal would also act as tax returns. "E-invoicing is a rapidly expanding technology which would help taxpayers in backward integration and automation of tax relevant processes.
 9. It would also help tax authorities in combating the menace of tax evasion. The Phase 1 is proposed to be voluntary and it shall be rolled-out from January 2020.
 10. According to the original plan, the NAA was to cease functioning after November this year. However, the anti-profiteering watchdog, which has delivered orders on **68 matters** so far, continues to receive complaints.
 11. In the case of EVs, the proposal was **to reduce the GST rate to 5% from 12%**, while the rate for chargers was to be cut to 12% from 18%.

CREATION OF NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on 23 June 2019 recommended **the creation of a National Employment Board** consisting of members from key Union Ministries, all state governments, industry experts and trade unions, among others, to look into and address issues faced in employment creation in the country. It also suggested that the government initiate a **comprehensive National Employment Mission.** Employment generation extends to multiple dimensions and a national mission is required to address all aspects holistically.

What

1. The Government **National Employment Mission** should include flexibility in hiring, tax incentives, education and skill development, and promotion of labour-intensive sectors. Recommending immediate action, CII outlined a five-point agenda for the upcoming Budget.
2. States should introduce "**fixed term employment**", while other labour law reforms should receive priority in new central government infrastructure project funding.
3. Transport and power projects along with industrial parks can be fast-tracked for these states to enable them to leverage such employment policies.
4. The industry body also said that under the **Prime Minister's Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)**, the wage threshold should be increased to Rs 25,000 from the current Rs 15,000.
5. PMRPY provides for government contribution to **Employees' Provident Fund (EPF)** and **Employee's Pension Scheme (EPS)** for new employees for three years, and is applicable to workers earning less than Rs 15,000. With wages increasing, the threshold for applicability should also be raised.

6. It further said that corporate income tax rebates should be considered for enterprises employing over a certain number of formal workers.

7. Regarding the concept of **national minimum wage**, CII said that states should have the power to determine minimum

Flashback

1. The **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government, and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.
2. **CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization**, playing a proactive role in India's development process.
3. **Founded in 1895**, India's premier business association has around 9000 members, from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect membership of over 300,000 enterprises from around 276 national and regional sectoral industry bodies.

wages based on three criteria -- **geographic location, skill and occupation**.

WTO PANEL RULES IN INDIA'S FAVOUR

A **WTO dispute resolution panel** has **ruled in favour of India** in a case **against the US** saying that America's domestic content requirements and subsidies provided by eight of its states in the renewable energy sector are **violative of global trade norms**. The panel concluded in its ruling that "**the measures**" of the US "are inconsistent" with certain provisions of the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) said in a statement on 27 June 2019.

What

1. It said the US has "**nullified or impaired benefits accruing to India under that agreement**". The GATT aims to promote trade by reducing or eliminating trade barriers like customs duties.

2. The ruling stated that **ten measures implemented by the US** pertaining to renewable energy sector are inconsistent with its obligations under **GATT 1994**.

3. In September 2016, **India had dragged the US to WTO's dispute settlement mechanism over America's domestic**

content requirements and subsidies provided by eight states in the renewable energy sector. Washington, California, Montana, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Michigan, Delaware and Minnesota were the eight states providing subsidies.

Flashback

1. The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** is an **intergovernmental organization** that is concerned with the regulation of **international trade between nations**.
2. The WTO officially commenced on **1 January 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement**, signed by 123 nations on 15 April 1994, replacing the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, which commenced in 1948. It is the largest international economic organization in the world.
3. The **World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization** dealing with the **rules of trade between nations**.
4. At its heart are the WTO agreements, negotiated and signed by the bulk of the world's trading nations and ratified in their parliaments. The goal is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.

4. India had stated that **the measures are inconsistent with global trade norms** because they provide less favourable treatment to imported products than to like domestic products, and because the subsidies are contingent on the use of domestic over imported goods.
5. The ruling of dispute panel can be challenged in **WTO's appellate body** which is part of the dispute settlement mechanism of the Geneva-based multilateral body.
6. The ruling comes at a time when there are trade tensions between the two countries.
7. The US has **rolled back export incentives from India under its GSP programme** and New Delhi has imposed higher customs duties on 28 American products.
8. The two countries are also at loggerheads on a number of other disputes at the WTO. The US has challenged certain export promotion schemes of India, while India has challenged US' unilateral hike on customs duties on certain steel and aluminium products.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

LIBRA CRYPTOCURRENCY

Facebook Inc **revealed plans** on 18 June 2019 **to launch a cryptocurrency called Libra**, the latest development in its effort to expand beyond social networking and move into **e-commerce and global payments**. Facebook has linked with 28 partners in a **Geneva-based entity called the Libra Association**, which will govern its new digital coin set to launch in the first half of 2020. **Facebook has also created a subsidiary called Calibra**, which will **offer digital wallets** to save, send and spend Libras. Calibra will be connected to Facebook's messaging platforms Messenger and WhatsApp, which already boast more than a billion users.

What

1. **The name "Libra" was inspired by Roman weight measurements**, the astrological sign for justice and the French word for freedom.
2. Facebook also appears to be betting it can squeeze revenue out of its messaging services through transactions and payments, something that is already happening on Chinese social apps like WeChat.
3. The Libra announcement comes as Facebook is grappling with public backlash due to a series of scandals, and may face opposition from privacy advocates, consumer groups, regulators and lawmakers.
4. Some Facebook adversaries have called for the company to incur penalties, or be forcibly broken up, for mishandling user data, allowing troubling material to appear on its site and not preventing Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election through a social media disinformation campaign.

Flashpoint

1. **Bitcoin, the most well-known cryptocurrency, was created in 2008** as a way for pseudonymous users to transfer value online through encrypted digital ledgers.
2. Calibra will conduct compliance checks on customers who want to use Libra, using verification and anti-fraud processes that are common among banks.
3. The subsidiary will only share customer data with Facebook or external parties if it has consent or in "limited cases" where it is necessary. That could include for law enforcement, public safety or general system functionality.

5. In recent years, cryptocurrency investors have lost hundreds of millions of dollars through hacks, and the market has been plagued by accusations of money-laundering, illegal drug sales and terrorist financing.

TWO EARTH-LIKE PLANETS DISCOVERED

Scientists have discovered two new Earth-like planets around one of the closest stars **within our galactic neighbourhood**. The planets are located **only 12.5 light years away orbiting the Teegarden star** — a red dwarf in the direction of the **constellation of Aries**, according to the study published in the journal *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. Its **surface temperature is 2,700 degrees Celsius**, and its mass is only one-tenth that of the Sun. Even though it is so near, its faintness impeded its discovery until 2003.

What

1. The observations showed that two planets are orbiting it, both of them similar to the planets in the inner part of the Solar System. They are just a little bigger than the Earth and are situated in the **'habitable zone'** where water can exist as a liquid, according to the researchers.
2. **Photometric campaigns** on this star have been carried out with the Carlos Sanchez Telescope at the Teide Observatory in Spain, and with the network of telescopes of the Las Cumbres Observatory, among others.
3. These studies demonstrate that the signals of the two planets cannot be due to the activity of the star, even though we could not detect the transits of the two new planets.
4. For the transit method to be viable, the planets must pass across the face of the stellar disc and block some of the light from the star during a short time, which means that it must lie on a line joining the Sun and the Earth.
5. This lucky alignment occurs for only a small fraction of planetary systems, researchers said. The type of star to which the Teegarden star belongs consists of the smallest for which researchers can measure the masses of their planets with current technology.

NEW NASA MISSIONS TO STUDY SUN

NASA will launch two new missions to advance our understanding of the Sun and its dynamic effects on space weather, the US space agency said. One of the selected missions will study how the Sun drives particles and energy into the solar system and a second will study Earth's response, NASA said. **The Sun generates a vast outpouring of solar particles known as the solar wind**, which can create a dynamic system of radiation in space called space weather.

What

1. **Near Earth, where such particles interact with our planet's magnetic field**, the space weather system can lead to profound impacts on human interests, such as astronauts' safety, radio communications, **global positioning system (GPS) signals**, and utility grids on the ground.
2. The more we understand what drives space weather and its interaction with the Earth and lunar systems, the more we can mitigate its effects — including safeguarding astronauts and technology crucial to **NASA's Artemis programme to the Moon**. The launch date for the two missions is "no later than August 2022".
3. We carefully selected these two missions not only because of the high-class science they can do in their own right, but because they will work well together with the other **heliophysics spacecraft advancing NASA's mission to protect astronauts**,

- space technology and life down here on Earth, said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for the Science Mission Directorate at NASA headquarters.
4. These missions will do big science, but they're also special because they come in small a package, which means that we can launch them together and get more research for the price of a single launch.
 5. The **Polarimeter to Unify the Corona and Heliosphere, or PUNCH, mission** will focus directly on the Sun's outer atmosphere, the corona, and how it generates the solar wind, according to NASA. **Composed of four suitcase-sized satellites**, PUNCH will image and track the solar wind as it leaves the Sun.
 6. The spacecraft also will track coronal mass ejections — large eruptions of solar material that can drive large space weather events near Earth — to better understand their evolution and develop new techniques for predicting such eruptions.
 7. The second mission is **Tandem Reconnection and Cusp Electrodynamics Reconnaissance Satellites, or TRACERS**.
 8. **TRACERS will observe particles and fields at the Earth's northern magnetic cusp region** — the region encircling Earth's pole, where our planet's magnetic field lines curve down towards Earth.
 9. The field lines guide particles from the boundary between Earth's magnetic field and interplanetary space down into the atmosphere.
 10. In the cusp area, with its easy access to our boundary with interplanetary space, TRACERS will study how magnetic fields around Earth interact with those from the Sun.
 11. **TRACERS will be the first space mission to explore this process in the cusp with two spacecraft**, providing observations of how processes change over both space and time.
 12. TRACERS' unique measurements will help with NASA's mission to safeguard our technology and astronauts in space. Together, these missions will investigate how the star we live with drives radiation in space.

ASTRONAUTS BACK ON EARTH

Three astronauts safely returned to Earth on 25 June 2019 after **spending more than six months aboard the International Space Station**. The **Soyuz capsule** with astronauts from Canada, Russia and the United States landed in the steppes of Kazakhstan, less than a minute ahead of the scheduled time, on 25 June 2019 after a 3 hour flight from the orbiting lab.

What

1. **Two of the astronauts had completed their maiden flights — Anne McClain of the United States and David Saint-Jacques of Canada**. The expedition commander Oleg Kononenko of Russia has ended his fourth space mission. All three spent 204 days in space.
2. Americans Nick Hague and Christina Koch and Russia's Alexey Ovchinin remain aboard the space station.
3. The space veteran Kononenko who was the first one to have been extracted from the capsule looked visibly tired and pale. McClain and Saint-Jacques were more energetic and gave a thumbs-up to the recovery team who greeted the three with applause.
4. The astronauts were put on camping chairs in the sun just by the capsule for a respite and initial medical checks.
5. The crew is expected to be taken to a local airport and fly to their home bases.

Flashback

1. **Soyuz is a series of spacecraft** designed for the **Soviet space program by the Korolev Design Bureau** (now RKK Energia) in the 1960s that remains in service today.
2. **The Soyuz succeeded the Voskhod spacecraft** and was originally built as part of the Soviet crewed lunar programs.
3. **The Soyuz spacecraft is launched on a Soyuz rocket**, the most reliable launch vehicle in the world to date. The Soyuz rocket design is based on the Vostok launcher, which in turn was based on the 8K74 or R-7A Semyorka, a Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile.
4. **All Soyuz spacecraft are launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.** Soyuz is currently the only means for crewed space flights in the world and is heavily used in the International Space Station program.

CYANIDE COMPOUNDS FOUND IN METEORITES

Scientists, including those from NASA; have discovered **compounds containing iron, cyanide, and carbon monoxide in carbon-rich meteorites** that may have helped power life on early Earth. The **extraterrestrial compounds found in meteorites resemble the active site of hydrogenases**, which are enzymes that provide energy to bacteria and archaea by breaking down hydrogen gas (H₂). The results suggest that these compounds were also present on early Earth, before life began, during a period of time when Earth was constantly bombarded by meteorites and the atmosphere was likely **more hydrogen-rich**.

What

1. **Cyanide, a carbon atom bound to a nitrogen atom**, is thought to be crucial for the origin of life, as it is involved in the non-biological synthesis of organic compounds like amino acids and nucleobases, which are the building blocks of proteins and nucleic acids used by all known forms of life.
2. Smith, along with Boise State assistant professor Mike Callahan, developed new analytical methods to extract and measure ancient traces of cyanide in meteorites.
3. They found that the meteorites containing cyanide belong to a group of carbon-rich meteorites called CM chondrites.
4. **Data collected by NASA's OSIRIS-REx spacecraft of asteroid Bennu** indicates that it is related to CM chondrites, said Jason Dworkin of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in the US.
5. **OSIRIS-REx will deliver a sample from Bennu to study on Earth in 2023.** We will search for these very compounds to try to connect Bennu to known meteorites and to understand the potential delivery of prebiotic compounds such as cyanide, which may have helped start life on the early Earth or other bodies in the solar system.
6. Researchers were surprised to discover that cyanide, along with carbon monoxide (CO), were binding with iron to form stable compounds in the meteorites.
7. They identified **two different iron cyano-carbonyl complexes in the meteorites** using high-resolution liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry.
8. One of the most interesting observations from our study is that these iron cyano-carbonyl complexes resemble portions of the active sites of hydrogenases, which have a very distinct structure.
9. **Hydrogenases are present in almost all modern bacteria and archaea** and are widely believed to be ancient in origin. **Hydrogenases are large proteins**, but the

active site — the region where chemical reactions take place — happens to be a much smaller metal-organic compound contained within the protein, according to Callahan.

10. **Cyanide and carbon monoxide** attached to a metal are unusual and rare in enzymes. **Hydrogenases are the exception.** When you compare the structure of these iron cyano-carbonyl complexes in meteorites to these active sites in hydrogenases, it makes you wonder if there was a link between the two.

CURIOSITY ROVER DETECTS METHANE

NASA's Curiosity Mars rover has found the largest amount of methane ever measured during its mission on the **Red Planet** — **about 21 parts per billion units by volume (ppbv)**, the US space agency said. **One ppbv means that if you take a volume of air on Mars, one billionth of the volume of air is methane**, according to the US space agency. The finding came from the rover's **Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM)** tunable laser spectrometer.

What

1. **It is exciting because microbial life is an important source of methane on Earth**, but methane can also be created through interactions between rocks and water.
2. Curiosity does not have instruments that can definitively say what the source of the methane is, or even if it is coming from a local source within Gale Crater or elsewhere on the planet.
3. With our current measurements, we have no way of telling if the methane source is biology or geology, or even ancient or modern, said SAM Principal Investigator Paul Mahaffy of NASA's Goddard Spaceflight Center in the US.
4. They have also noted sudden spikes of methane, but the science team knows very little about how long these transient plumes last or why they are different from the seasonal patterns.
5. The SAM team has organised a different experiment to gather more information on what might be a transient plume.
6. They also need time to collaborate with other science teams, including those with the **European Space Agency's Trace Gas Orbiter**, which has been in its science orbit for a little over a year.

MISCELLANEOUS

INDIA RANK 74TH IN SNB STATISTICS

India has move an analysis of the latest annual banking statistics released by the **Swiss National Bank (SNB)** shows that **India remains ranked very low** when it comes to money parked by Indian individuals and enterprises in Swiss banks, including through their India-based branches, while accounting for just about **0.07 per cent of the aggregate funds** parked by all foreign clients of Switzerland-based banks. In comparison, **the top-ranked UK accounted for more than 26 per cent of the total foreign funds parked with Swiss banks** at the end of 2018. Among the top-ranked jurisdictions, the **UK is followed by the US, West Indies, France and Hong Kong in the top five**. The top-five countries alone account for more than 50 per cent of the aggregate foreign funds parked with the Swiss banks, while the top-10 account for nearly two-thirds.

What

1. The **top-15 countries account for nearly 75 per cent of all foreign money in Swiss banks**, while the contribution of the top-30 is almost 90 per cent. The top-10

- countries also include Bahamas, Germany, Luxembourg, Cayman Islands and Singapore.
2. Among the **five-nation BRICS block of emerging economies, India is ranked the lowest while Russia is ranked the highest at 20th place**, followed by China at 22nd, South Africa at 60th and Brazil at 65th place in terms of amount of money parked by their residents and enterprises at the end of 2018.
 3. The countries **ranked higher than India also include Mauritius (71st)**, New Zealand (59th), the Philippines (54th), Venezuela (53rd), Seychelles (52nd), Thailand (39th), Canada (36th), Turkey (30th), Israel (28th), Saudi Arabia (21st), Panama (18th), Japan (16th), Italy (15th), Australia (13th), UAE (12th) and Guernsey (11th).
 4. However, several of India's neighbouring nations are ranked lower, with Pakistan ranking 82nd, Bangladesh 89th, Nepal 109th, Sri Lanka 141st, Myanmar 187th and Bhutan 193rd.
 5. **This is the first time in the last four years that the funds linked to Pakistan in Swiss banks have slipped below that of Indians.** A number of other major countries also saw their funds falling in Swiss banks amid a global clampdown against the erstwhile banking secrecy walls in the Alpine nation.
 6. The **funds, described by SNB as 'liabilities' of Swiss banks** or 'amounts due to' their clients, are official figures disclosed by Swiss authorities and do not indicate the exact quantum of the much-debated alleged black money held in famed safe havens of Switzerland.
 7. The official figures, disclosed annually by Switzerland's central bank, also do not include the money that Indians, NRIs or others might have in Swiss banks in the names of entities from different countries.
 8. It has been often alleged that Indians and other nationals seeking to stash their illicit wealth abroad use multiple layers of various jurisdictions, including tax havens, to shift the money to Swiss banks.
 9. **India will start getting this automatic data from this year**, while it has already been getting information on accounts where proof of illicit funds can be furnished.
 10. The funds officially held by Indians with banks in Switzerland now accounts for only 0.07 per cent of the total funds kept by all foreign clients in the Swiss banking system, almost same as the level seen at 2017-end after a modest increase from 0.04 per cent a year before that, as per an analysis of the latest figures compiled by the SNB (Swiss National Bank) as on 2018-end.
 11. **India was placed at 75th position in 2015 and 61st in the year before**, though it used to be among the top-50 countries in terms of holdings in Swiss banks till 2007. The country was ranked highest at 37th place in the year 2004.

What is black money?

1. **There is no official definition of black money in economic theory**, with several different terms such as **parallel economy, black money, black incomes, unaccounted economy, illegal economy** and **irregular economy** all is being used more or less synonymously.
2. **The simplest definition of black money could possibly be money that is hidden from tax authorities.** That is, black money can come from two broad categories: **illegal activity** and **legal but unreported activity**.
3. **The first category is the more obvious of the two.** Money that is earned through illegal activity is obviously not reported to the tax authorities, and so is black.
4. The second category comprises income from legal activity that is not reported to the tax authorities. For example, let us assume that a piece of land is sold, with the

payment made in the proportion of 60% by cheque or electronic transfer, and 40% in cash.

5. If that 40% cash component is not reported to the Income Tax Department, then it is black money. A large number of small shops around the country almost exclusively do business in cash without receipts. All of this could potentially be black money.
6. Another major source of black money is income earned by companies that is routed through shell companies abroad, thereby evading tax authorities.

How can the government curb black money?

1. There are **several ways and the first is through legislative action**. The government has already enacted several laws that seek to formalise the economy and make it necessary to report economic transactions.
2. These include the **Central Goods and Services Tax Act**, the various GST Acts at the State levels, **the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015**, the **Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act**, and the **Fugitive Economic Offenders Act to name a few**.
3. Another method employed by the government to make it harder for transactions to be hidden is to mandate the reporting of PAN for transactions of more than ₹2.5 lakh, and the prohibition of cash receipts of ₹2 lakh or more and a penalty equal to the amount of such receipts if a person contravenes the provision.
4. The Income Tax Department has also started monitoring non-filers of income tax returns using third-party information to identify persons who have undertaken high value financial transactions but not filed their returns.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA 2019

International Day of Yoga 2019 celebrated on 21st June 2019. This year the world was celebrated the **fifth International Day of Yoga** with the **theme of "Climate Action"**. Events for the day, organized at the United Nations include **"Yoga with Gurus"** on 20th June 2019, which would be followed by a panel discussion on 21st June. Similarly, several Yoga events will be organized across the world, where people from different walks of life gather to practice yoga.

In India

1. **On the fifth International Yoga Day**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the celebrations was held in **Ranchi**.
2. **The country of origin of yogic practices**, several events organized in big cities and small towns on International Day of Yoga. People gathered early morning, in pre-decided locations to perform yoga under the guidance of trained yoga masters and spread awareness about its health and spiritual benefits.
3. Prime Minister of India has urged all the nations and citizens to take part in yoga practices and spread awareness. The Prime Minister of India was also distributed Yoga Awards 2019 on International Day of Yoga 2019.

World Yoga Day Theme

1. The theme of World Yoga Day 2019 is "Climate Action".
2. The theme of World Yoga Day 2018 was "Yoga for Peace".
3. Theme of 2017 was "Yoga For Health".
4. Theme of 2016 was "Connect the Youth".
5. Theme of 2015 was "Yoga For Harmony And Peace"

Flashback

1. **International Day of Yoga**, or commonly and unofficially referred to as Yoga Day, is celebrated annually on **21 June since its inception in 2015**.

2. An international day for yoga was declared unanimously by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**.
3. Yoga is a physical, mental and spiritual practice originated in India. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his UN address suggested the date of **21 June, as it is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere** and shares a special significance in many parts of the world.

IOC APPROVES EXCLUSION OF AIBA

International Olympic Committee on 26 June 2019 officially **took over the boxing qualification** and competition for next year's Tokyo 2020 Olympics and suspended international boxing federation AIBA following a vote at its session. The IOC voted unanimously to implement a recommendation of its executive board to oust AIBA from the Tokyo 2020 Games over issues surrounding its finances and governance and suspend the body until the issues are resolved.

What

1. **AIBA has been in turmoil over its finances and governance for years** with the federation \$16 million in debt and an ongoing bitter battle over the presidency that has split the body internally.
2. Serbian IOC member Nenad Lalovic, who heads an IOC task force to look into the ties with AIBA, earlier on Wednesday delivered a damning report to the IOC session, saying the association could reach a debt of as much as \$29 million.
3. AIBA president Gafur Rahimov suspended himself from the post in March because of his presence on an U.S. Treasury Department sanctions list "for providing material support" to a criminal organisation. The Uzbek strongly denies the allegations.
4. Rahimov's presence on that sanctions list was extremely damaging to the IOC though he has been replaced on an interim basis by Mohamed Moustahsane.
5. Lalovic said AIBA's debt meant money would not go to sports and the athletes in the future and the organisation still faced problems with refereeing.
6. **AIBA largely depends on Olympic Games revenues** to survive between Games and has started letting people go as a result of its Olympic exclusion. The sport's governing body will discuss the IOC decision at its Executive Committee meeting on 27 June 2019.

CONSTRUCTIONS PERMIT FOR POLAVARAM PROJECT

The Centre on 26 June 2019 gave a **two-year extension to the permission for construction work** issued for the **Polavaram Multipurpose project** in Andhra Pradesh. **The Polavaram project** is very important to the **people of Andhra Pradesh** as it **will irrigate nearly 3 lakh hectares of land** generate **hydel power** with an installed capacity of 960 MW.

What

1. **It will provide drinking water facilities to 540 enroute villages** covering a population of 25 lakh, particularly in Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari and Krishna Districts.
2. The Centre had asked the Andhra Pradesh government in 2011 to stop construction. In 2014, the NDA government designated the dam as a national project and the ministry kept the "Stop Work Order" in abeyance to allow the construction work.
3. The order has been kept in the same state from the past six years. Considering the immense importance of the project this time the Ministry is keeping the "**Stop Work Order**" in abeyance to allow construction work for two years without permission to

impound water. The project envisages the **construction of an Earth-cum-Rock filled dam** across the river Godavari.

Flashback

1. **Polavaram Project, is an under construction multi-purpose National project** on the Godavari River in the West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh.
2. The project has been accorded national project status by the Union Government of India and will be the last to be accorded the status.
3. It's reservoir back water spreads up to the Dummugudem Anicut i.e approx 150 KM back form Polavaram Spillway on main river side and approx 115 KM in Sabari River side.
4. It is located 40km to the upstream of Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage in Rajamahendravaram City. Thus back water spreads into parts of Chhattisgarh and Odisha States.