

A blurred background image of a student with glasses sitting at a desk, using a laptop. The student's hands are visible, one holding a blue pen and the other on the keyboard. The image is partially obscured by a large purple and orange graphic overlay on the left side.

**Weekly Economic
& Social Issues (ESI)**

**Study Material
15-21 May 2022**

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15-21st May 2022

Dear readers,

Weekly Economic & Social Issues (ESI) notes are a collection of important news and events that occurred in the third week (15-21st) of May 2022. This file is important for all **regulatory body** exams.

1. Haryana launches scheme for fodder growers

- The Haryana government launched the **'Charaa-Bijae Yojana'** to encourage farmers to grow fodder and help gaushalas, which have been grappling with fodder shortage amid a rise in the stray cattle population.
- Under the scheme, farmers who have tied up with **gaushalas, will be eligible to receive a financial aid of ₹10,000 per acre for up to 10 acres under fodder cultivation.** The number of cow shelters in the state increased from 175 in 2017 to 600 in 2022. Most cow shelters remain overcrowded due to an increase in the stray cattle population.
- The money will be transferred to the farmers' bank account through direct benefit transfer.

2. WEF Report: Urgent Action Needed to Ensure a Resilient Energy Transition Amid Severe Global Challenges

- The **World Economic Forum(WEF)'s new report titled "Fostering Effective Energy Transition 2022"** indicates that **urgent action is required by both private and public sectors** to ensure a resilient transition amid the most severe energy crisis since the 1970s.
- The report is built on **10 years of Energy Transition Index, an annual country benchmarking report.**
- This special edition report, launched by WEF in collaboration with Accenture, provides detailed key recommendations for governments, companies, consumers and other stakeholders on how to progress the energy transition.
- This special edition report on global energy transition builds on the trends from the Energy Transition Index to provide perspective on **the current challenges and recommendations on how to navigate the transition through a turbulent macroeconomic and geopolitical environment.**
- A series of compounded shocks pose short-term risks to energy affordability, sustainability, and energy security. However, the window to prevent the worst consequences of climate change is closing fast, and the transition must be supercharged by ramping up clean energy investments, raising policy ambitions, and transforming consumer and industrial energy consumption.
- Strengthening energy security is paramount, dual diversification – in import partners in the short-term, and in fuel mix in the long-term – can improve resilience.

3. Merchandise Exports scale a new high in April; cross USD 40 billion, registering 30% growth over April, 2021

- After a record performance in the last financial year, **the exports continued robust growth in April, 2022 with merchandise exports scaling a new high** by crossing USD 40 bn.
- This is an increase by **over 30% vis-à-vis April 2021**.
- Petroleum products (127.69%), Electronic goods (71.69%), cereals (60.83%), coffee (59.38%), processed food (38.82%) and leather product (36.68%) exports led the way in achieving the record performance.
- Services performed extremely well to reach USD 27.60 bn, which is an increase of 53% over April 2021.
- India's overall exports (Merchandise and Services combined) in April 2022* are estimated to be **USD 67.79 Billion**, exhibiting a positive growth of 38.90 per cent over the same period last year. Overall imports in April 2022* are estimated to be USD 75.87 Billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 36.31 per cent over the same period last year.

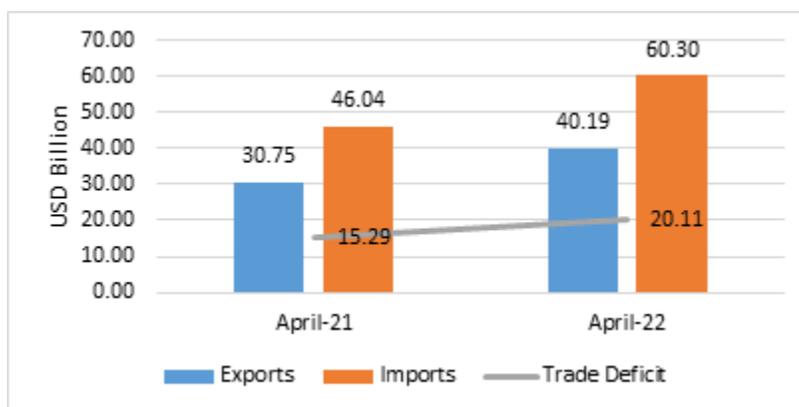
Fig 1: Overall Trade during April 2022*



MERCHANDISE TRADE

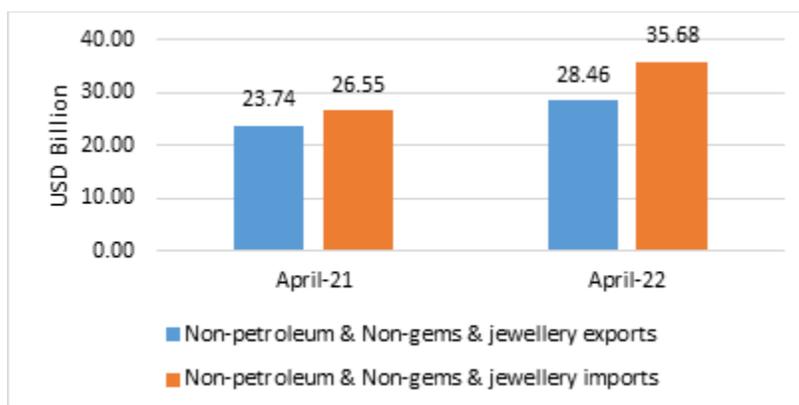
- Merchandise **exports in April 2022 were USD 40.19 Billion, as compared to USD 30.75 Billion in April 2021**, exhibiting a positive growth of 30.70 per cent.
- Merchandise **imports** in April 2022 were USD 60.30 Billion, which is an increase of 30.97 per cent over imports of USD 46.04 Billion in April 2021.
- The merchandise trade deficit in April 2022 was estimated at USD 20.11 Billion as against USD 15.29 Billion in April 2021, which is an increase of 31.50 per cent.

Fig 2: Merchandise Trade during April 2022



- Non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports in April 2022 were USD 28.46 Billion, registering a positive growth of 19.89 per cent over non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports of USD 23.74 Billion in April 2021.
- Non-petroleum, non-gems & jewellery (gold, silver & precious metals) imports were USD 35.68 Billion in April 2022 with a positive growth of 34.37 per cent over Non-petroleum, non-gems & jewellery imports of USD 26.55 Billion in April 2021.

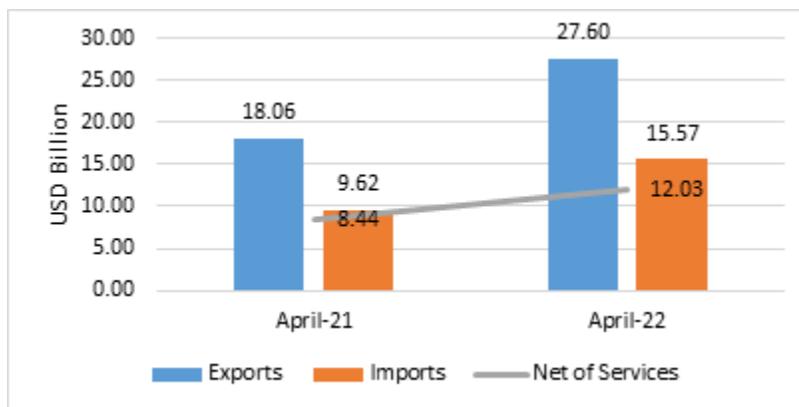
Fig 3: Trade excluding Petroleum and Gems & Jewellery during April 2022



SERVICES TRADE

- The estimated value of services export for April 2022* is USD 27.60 Billion, exhibiting a positive growth of **52.87 per cent vis-a-vis April 2021 (USD 18.06 Billion)**.
- The estimated value of services import for April 2022* is USD 15.57 Billion exhibiting a positive growth of **61.87 per cent vis-à-vis April 2021 (USD 9.62 Billion)**.
- The services trade balance in April 2022* is estimated at USD 12.03 Billion, which is an increase of 42.61 per cent over April 2021 (USD 8.44 Billion).

Fig 4: Services Trade during April 2022*



4. 7th Japan-India ICT Joint Working Group meeting held under India-Japan ICT Comprehensive Cooperation Framework

- The 7th Japan-India ICT Joint Working Group meeting was held on 13th May 2022 on a virtual platform. Mr. V.L Kantha Rao, Additional Secretary, Department of Telecommunications and H.E. Mr. Sasaki YUJI, Vice Minister for Policy Coordination (International Affairs), Japan co-chaired the meeting.
- Recalling the India Japan Summit Meeting in March 2022, both sides recognized the need for growing cooperation under the **India-Japan Digital Partnership with a view to enhancing digital economy through promotion of joint projects for digital transformation**, support to provide opportunities for Indian IT professionals to work in Japan and Japanese companies, and collaboration made in the area of IoT, AI and other emerging technologies.
- The JWG discussions were focused on enhancing further cooperation in various fields like 5G, Open RAN, Telecom Network Security, submarine cable systems, and Quantum Communications.
- India and Japan share a common vision of a peaceful, stable and prosperous world and this has now taken the shape of **“Special Strategic and Global Partnership”**.
- This year 2022 is the 70th Anniversary of India Japan Diplomatic relations and India is also entering Amrit Kaal, the 25 year long lead up to India @100. ICT being the key driver of development provides a massive opportunity for cooperation between both countries to build a robust foundation for the present and future world.
- The participants of 7th JWG meeting included Government officials, Industry and academia stakeholders from India and Japan. The meeting deliberated on the best practices and experience on Open RAN, Massive MIMO, Quantum Communications, Connected Cars, 5G Use cases and 6G Innovation. The 7th JWG agreed to enhance cooperation in these areas under the framework of Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between India and Japan.

5. Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Uttar Pradesh Jal Shakti Minister Shri Swatantra Dev Singh inaugurate country's first "Amrit Sarovar" at Patwai, Rampur (UP).

- The **country's first "Amrit Sarovar" was inaugurated** by Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Uttar Pradesh Jal Shakti Minister Shri Swatantra **Dev Singh at Patwai, Rampur (UP)**.

- "Amrit Sarovar" will not only help in protecting the **environment and conserving water, it will also be an attraction for the people of nearby areas**. Besides food court, fountains and lighting and other entertainment facilities, boating is also available in this "Amrit Sarovar".
- With a view to conserve water for the future, **the Prime Minister launched a new Mission on Amrit Sarovar on 24th April 2022**. The Mission is aimed at developing and **rejuvenating 75 water bodies in each district of the country as a part of celebration of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav**. In total, it would lead to creation of 50,000 water bodies of a size of about an Acre or more.
- This Mission has been launched with a whole of **Government Approach in which 6 Ministries/Department** namely Dept of Rural Development , Department of land resources, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Department of Water resources, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate changes.
- **Also Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Application and Geo-informatics(BISAG-N) has been engaged as Technical partner for the Mission**.
- The Mission works through the States and Districts, through refocusing of various schemes such as **Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, XV Finance Commission Grants, PMKSY sub schemes such as Watershed Development Component, Har Khet Ko Pani besides States' own schemes**. It may also be mentioned that the Mission encourages mobilisation of citizen and non-govt resources for supplementing these efforts.
- **The Mission Amrit Sarovar is to be completed by 15th August 2023. Around 50,000 such Amrit Sarovar may be constructed in the country**. Each of these Amrit Sarovar will have approx. area of 1 acre with a water holding capacity of 10,000 cubic meter.

6. NSIC – MSME Ministry organizes ‘Enterprise India- Mega Job Fair’

- Shri B.B Swain, Secretary (MSME) inaugurated the **‘MEGA JOB FAIR’ and a New testing facility for MSMEs at NTSC (Okhla) New Delhi**.
- The major objective of Mega Job Fair was to provide **employment opportunities to the students who are passing out from different courses being conducted in the Centre**. More than 30 companies including renowned companies like LG Electronics, Munjal Showa (Hero Honda Group), JBM Group, Maxop, SPM Auto Comp, were present with Various job offers.
- This Mega Job Fair is **the first offline job fair organized by NSIC** after pandemic period to facilitate the trainees of the Centre for their employment through campus placements.
- The NSIC Centre organizes job fairs periodically to fulfil the requirement of skilled manpower for industry. During last 6-7 years more than 70,000 trainees have been trained by the Centre and many of them have been successfully placed in the industry through campus placements.

7. National Scheme Sanctioning Committee Considers Annual Implementation Plan of States/UTs Under Swachh Bharat Mission- Grameen

- The third meeting of the **National Scheme Sanctioning Committee (NSSC) under Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G) Phase II** for consideration of the Annual Implementation Plans of all the States and Union Territories for the financial year 2022-23 was held today.
- It was recommended that villages which have either solid waste management or liquid waste management assets may be easily converted to ODF Plus Model category.
- Besides, those villages which are either aspirational or have population more than 5000 may also be taken up on priority.
- Further, the strategies for biodegradable waste management, GOBARDhan, Plastic Waste Management, Grey Water Management and Faecal Sludge Management were also detailed.

8. NITI Aayog Launches the National Data & Analytics Platform

- NITI Aayog launched the **National Data & Analytics Platform (NDAP) for open public use.**
- The platform **aims to democratize access to public government data by making data accessible**, interoperable, interactive, and available on a user-friendly platform.
- It hosts **foundational datasets from various government agencies, presents them coherently, and provides tools for analytics and visualization.**
- This public launch follows a beta release of the platform in August 2021 that had provided access to a limited number of users for testing and feedback.
- NDAP follows a **use-case based approach to ensure that the datasets hosted on the platform are tailored to the needs of data users** from government, academia, journalism, civil society, and the private sector.
- All datasets are standardized to a common schema, which makes it easy to merge datasets and do cross-sectoral analysis.

9. NHA organizes convention of Technology Partners of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

- The National Health Authority (NHA) organized an **exclusive convention for technology partners of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) at New Delhi** on 13th May 2022. The event brought together representatives from over 40 health tech organizations from the government and private sector to discuss the different ways in which the digital health ecosystem of India can be strengthened further.
- The core objective of ABDM is to leverage technology to deliver health services to remotest areas of the country.
- To address the lack of infrastructure and access to doctors, ABDM envisages all healthcare-related activities to move online.
- For this, it is imperative that we take up the onboarding of healthcare professionals and health facilities in the national registries of HPR (Healthcare Professionals Registry) and HFR (Health Facilities Registry) being built by ABDM.

- The health tech players can bring in innovative solutions with lesser steps to onboard professionals & facilities using the open APIs published. They can further train other small players on ABDM onboard process and spread awareness about benefits of registering in HFR/HPR.

10. Department of Telecommunication Launches “GatiShakti Sanchar” Portal for Centralised Right of Way (RoW) approvals

- Universal and equitable access to Broadband services across the country, especially in the rural areas- is one of the most important visions of Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. In line with the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & IT and Railways, **has launched the “GatiShakti Sanchar” portal for Centralised Right of Way (RoW) approvals** (www.sugamsanchar.gov.in).
- The portal has been developed **keeping in view the vision areas of the National Broadband Mission at the core, which are, providing broadband infrastructure as a core utility** to every citizen, Governance and services on demand and in particular, digital empowerment of the citizens of our country.
- National Broadband Mission (NBM) was set up by the **Department of Telecommunication (DoT) on December 17, 2019**; to facilitate universal and equitable access to broadband services across the country, especially in rural and remote areas. To fulfil this vision, it is imperative that a backbone of infrastructure is created by facilitating smooth and efficient deployment of Digital Communications Infrastructure across the country.
- To ensure that, DoT, is launching the “GatiShakti Sanchar” portal. This will provide a robust mechanism to achieve the goal of “Broadband for All” as envisaged in the National Digital Communication Policy-2.
- The portal will enable applicants **form various Telecom Service providers (TSPs) as well as Infrastructure providers (IPs) to apply at a common single portal for Right of Way permissions to lay down Optical Fibre Cable** and for erecting mobile towers to State/UT Governments and local bodies.
- As it smoothen the process of RoW permissions as well as faster approvals; it is believed to facilitate easy rollout of 5G services, in which a Base Transceiver Station (BTS) is installed at very short intervals. For effective monitoring of RoW applications across the country, the portal even comes fitted with a potent dashboard showing State and District wise pendency status.
- Government of India is committed to **facilitate “Ease of Doing Business” and the launch of the “GatiShakti Sanchar” portal is another step in that direction.** The portal will also bring an array of advantages to the Government Bodies- both Central and State/UT. It will smoothen the RoW approval process, which will lead to:
 - Fast laying of more Optical Fiber Cable and thus will accelerate fiberization
 - Increased tower density which will enhance connectivity and improve the quality of various telecom services
 - Increased fiberization of telecom towers, thus ensuring better Broadband speed, across the country

- The portal, has been developed by MP state Electronics Development Corporation on behalf of DoT and is expected to give a **fillip to the nation's 'AatmaNirbhar' movement, contributing actively to transform our country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.**
- The positive impact of these efforts by the DoT have percolated to both the rural and urban India, ensuring robust broadband connectivity, which in turn will ensure uninterrupted digital access, digital delivery of services and digital inclusion of all, based on technology that is sustainable, affordable and transformative.

11. Statement Made by India on Thematic Issues, Migration, Gender, Sand and Dust Storm at COP15 UNCCD

- Following is the statement made **by India on thematic issues-Migration, Gender, Sand and Dust storms** at the 15th Session of the Conference of Parties of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Cote d'Ivoire:

Migration:

- Desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) act as one of the drivers that cause migration. Other factors include climate and environmental changes. Promotion of sustainable agriculture and its associated value chains offer promising avenues to stop out-migration of rural population.
- Linking urban-rural communities and developmental actions to addresses migration was insisted in decision COP 14. COP15 concludes that in rural areas affected by DLDD, livelihood opportunities through land restoration activities should be ensured.
- **Integrated land-use planning together with enhancing green and blue infrastructure** for sustainable development should be prioritised. A stronger symbiotic **urban-rural linkage targeting vulnerable groups that include women, rural youth, refugees,** and internally displaced person be provided with on-farm and off-farm employment.
- Youth are most likely to face migration and engaging youth is vital to restoration efforts for resilient and sustainable food systems. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner under Ministry of Home Affairs is the **designated authority in India that compiles information on migration based on the data compiled during national census that usually takes place at a gap of ten years' time interval.**
- Reducing the extent of human migration is one of the pronounced achievements of watershed development programmes being implemented by Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India. About 60% of the amount spent in each watershed goes for labour component which generates substantial employment for the local landless, small and **marginal farming community people.** Use of machinery in watershed activities is kept to the minimum so that employment opportunities are kept intact which minimize human migration from the watershed project areas. Convergence with MGNREGS and other related schemes is an added advantage for watershed programmes to generate employment and minimize migration.

- **Watershed Development Component – Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (WDC-PMKSY) has generated more than 37.73 Million man-days of employment** which also contributed to the reduction in migration in the treated areas, especially, during pandemic period. It has further acted as an enabler of reverse migration, when labour force was reverted to their native places and engaged with the watershed workforce.

Gender:

- The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.
- Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres.
- **From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development.** In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women.
- The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.
- **The goal of National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001** is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.
- **Empowerment of women is an integral part of PMKSY in India.** Representation of women has been envisioned in the Watershed Committees involved in planning, implementation and maintenance of watershed interventions. Women-based community organizations such as Self-Help Groups, User Groups and farmer producer organizations are formed and nurtured while implementing the watershed programs.
- The issues pertaining to gender in India is addressed by two ministries, namely, Ministry of Women and Child Development, and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Gender equality is also a major sustainable development goal (SDG 5). In this context, India had proposed its National Action Plan to improve statistics on gender.
- **The SDG-5 and the basic premise for considering gender as a thematic area is directed towards phasing out gender discrimination from all sectors.** The Government of India has taken steps to address this issue at the most fundamental level through the "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao". The scheme allows a girl child to be self-sustainable with regard to her own education. To increase participation of women in scientific innovation, the Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) programme has been initiated by the Department of Science Technology, Government of India.

- Decision at COP 14 **emphasized on raising awareness amongst women with regard to land degradation. With respect to this, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** has been conducting knowledge exchange programs with women farmers residing in drought-prone areas. However, as far as SDG-5 is concerned, there is scope for ample progress to be made especially in the areas of women participation in labour.

Sand and Dust storms

- Sand and dust storms (in short SDS) are of common occurrence in **arid and semi-arid regions both in Asia and Africa and affects 11 of the 17 SDGs**. SDS adversely impact environment and quality of life. India highly appreciates that United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is supporting regional cooperation for issues related to SDS.
- COP(14) requested UNCCD **to finalise and publish Sand and Dust Storms Compendium to provide information and guidance on** assessing and addressing the risks related to SDS.
- India acknowledges and fully supports that the UNCCD secretariat has been assisting countries in regional planning and policy framework on combating SDS. Several pilot projects were implemented in central and northeast Asia including China, Korea and Russia to formulate national SDS plans.
- In India, work on monitoring of **SDS is primarily done by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- COP(15), para 23 highlights about major gaps in monitoring, risk assessment, impact assessment and emergency response measures while addressing issues related to the SDS.
- Anthropogenic SDS source mitigation is **lacking in most of the countries and there is a lack of required data and information to address SDS related issues**.
- Capacity building of parties to address SDS through SDS toolbox and decision support system was envisaged. The first SDS Toolbox will be made available by mid-2022. **Usually, these Toolbox provide methodology to integrate available information in a scientific way** to address envisaged problems at a coarser scale.
- India can designate appropriate remote sensing agency (such as SAC/ NRSC) to develop GIS layers at finer scale to integrate indicator layers to test its applicability on ground for further improvement. This would address the issues in a more pragmatic way.

12. Morgan Stanley cuts India's FY23 growth forecast to 7.6%

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised **downwards its growth projection for FY23 to 7.2 per cent from 7.8 per cent earlier**.
- Morgan Stanley pared India's growth forecast **for FY23 to 7.6 per cent from 7.9 per cent**, estimated earlier. It said that a slowdown in global growth, higher commodity prices and risk aversion in global capital markets expose Asia's third-largest economy to downside risks.

- The key will likely be from an **adverse impact on business sentiment as a slowdown in demand, higher inflation, and the cost of funding impair balance sheet strength** and delay the capex recovery. On the domestic side, a change in policy stance by the government or central bank could expose the economy to macro stability risks, leading to slower growth.
- The investment bank said while its baseline forecast for India is **7.6 per cent growth for FY23, its bearish and bullish growth projections are 6.7 per cent and 8 per cent**, respectively.
- Economic forecasters have been slashing growth projections for India amid rising geopolitical tension that has led to escalating commodity prices.
- Last month, the World Bank also slashed its FY23 growth forecast for India to **8 per cent from 8.7 per cent estimated in January**. It cited tepid recovery in consumption demand and escalating uncertainties due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Despite the cyclical headwinds, Morgan Stanley, however, sees the Indian economy expanding at above pre-pandemic growth rates in FY23 and FY24.
- For FY24, the investment bank lowered its growth forecast to 6.7 per cent from 7 per cent estimated earlier.
- The investment bank has projected global growth at 2.9 per cent in calendar year 2022, less than half of the 6.2 per cent growth in 2021. Morgan Stanley said China's growth may reach merely 4.2 per cent in 2022, about half the pace of last year.

THE PREDICTIONS		in %	
	FY23	FY24	
GDP	7.6	6.7	
CPI	6.5	5.3	
Current account deficit (as % of GDP)	3.3	2.8	
Policy rate	6.25	6.5	

Source: Morgan Stanley

13. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare signs MoU with UNDP for strategic partnership on Agriculture, Crop Insurance and Credit

- The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). As per **the MoU, UNDP will provide technical support to two government programs: Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) & Kisan Credit Card-Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (KCC-MISS)**.

- By leveraging its expertise, UNDP will **provide technical assistance to effectively implement agriculture credit and crop insurance schemes**. It will also help the government in the capacity development of small and marginal farmers, women farmers, sharecroppers, & tenant farmers.
- PMFBY was launched in 2016 and is being administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. It is a comprehensive crop insurance scheme. It covers all Food & Oilseeds crops and Annual Horticultural Crops for which a requisite number of Crop Cutting Experiments (CCEs) are conducted. It was earlier compulsory for farmers who took crop loans, but in 2020 it is made voluntary for all. The premium paid by farmers under PMFBY is Rs 21000 crore, whereas they received around Rs 1.15 lakh crore as compensation.
- Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, **launched in 1998, provides short-term credit to farmers for their agricultural needs**. In 2019, the KCC scheme is extended to the fisheries and animal husbandry sector.
- If the Banks give short-term crop loans up to **Rs 3 lakh to farmers at an interest rate of 7% annum, they will get interest subvention of 2% from the government**. If the farmers pay their loans on time, they will get a 3% interest subvention. Thus, the effective interest rate for such farmers is 4%.

14. MoRD, Amazon ink pact to turn rural women into entrepreneurs

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Rural Development and Amazon Seller Services Private Limited (Amazon) was signed at Krishi Bhawan.
- The MoU between MoRD and Amazon to **achieve sales on the platform and ensuring that the maximum number of women artisans become 'lakhpatis'**.
- It is envisaged that this alliance will enable SHG entrepreneurs under NRLM to offer their products to buyers across India through **AmazonSaheli Storefront and help SHG women** achieve good prices for their varied products.
- To further facilitate the marketing of SHG products, NRLM is creating an alliance with Amazon Saheli and both the entities signed a non-Financial MoU to offer SHG women the Storefront of Amazon Saheli. This will open a new platform for making SHG products available to all Indian buyers on Amazon.

Following are the salient features of the MoU signed today for supporting the SHG products selling through the Amazon Saheli Storefront platform:

- Amazon & MoRD will jointly enable the Commercial and social development of women-led rural enterprises across identified States/UTs
- Amazon will provide Training & Onboarding support to MoRD appointed sellers to list products from Self Help Groups (SHGs) associated with MoRD on Amazon.in
- Amazon will offer Referral fee waiver, imaging & cataloging and account management support at launch to mitigate a cold start for SHGs

- Amazon will help market and promote products listed by SHGs through the Saheli Storefront, Social media, Events, and Onsite merchandising
- MoRD (through respective SRLM) will help identify and apprise GST verified sellers to sell on Amazon. in, and assist the sellers in securing GST, PAN, etc.
- MoRD & Amazon will conduct joint workshops for awareness creation and assist the sellers in listing their products and unlocking growth levers to grow their business on Amazon.

15. Chhattisgarh becomes first state to restore old pension scheme

- Chhattisgarh has become the **first state in the country to restore the old pension scheme in order to provide assured income to retired employees**. The state government has sent a proposal to the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) for the withdrawal of Rs 17,000 crore accrued under the National Pension Scheme since November 2004.
- The government issued a notification saying that the old pension scheme will be effective from April 1, 2022. Also, the 10 per cent deduction for monthly contribution from the salary of government employees as a contribution to the new pension scheme will be abolished from April 1, 2022. However, **a minimum of 12 per cent of basic salary will be deducted as per the General Provident Fund rule**.
- The old pension scheme gives **50 per cent of the employee's salary as pension**.

16. Centre relaxes FAQ of shriveled and broken grains upto 18% without any value cut

- The Centre has decided to allow FCI to procure wheat in Punjab and Haryana including UT of Chandigarh for central pool by **relaxing the Fair Average Quality of shrivelled and broken grains upto 18 %** without any value cut. This decision will reduce the hardship of farmers and avoid distress sale of wheat.
- The state governments of Punjab and Haryana wrote to the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) seeking relaxation in Uniform Specifications of **Wheat for RMS 2022-23. The limit of shrivelled and broken grains is 6 % and relaxation was sought upto 20 %**.
- Central teams were deputed to Punjab and Haryana during April – May 2022 to collect very large size samples from the Mandis and these were analysed in FCI labs. The results indicated presence of shrivelled and broken grains in varying percentages and beyond FAQ norms.
- The emergence of **shrivelled grains is a natural phenomenon appearing as a result of extreme heat wave that enveloped the northern part of the country in the month of March**.
- These adverse weather conditions are beyond the control of the farmers and hence, they should not be penalized for such natural occurrence. Accordingly, the change in texture of the grain deserves to be sympathetically considered by government to ease the hardship of farmers. Thus, suitable relaxation in FAQ norms would protect interests of farmers and promote efficient procurement and distribution of Food grains.

17. Dr. Virendra Kumar to inaugurate the services of CRC- Shillong for skill development, rehabilitation and empowerment of the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

- Union Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment Dr.Virendra Kumar will inaugurate the services of Composite Regional Centre(CRC) for Skill Development, Rehabilitation and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) at Shillong, Meghalaya on 17th May 2022.
- CRC- Shillong is situated around 10 acres of land given by Govt. of Meghalaya at Monfort Building, Dhankheti, Shillong and **functioning under the administrative control of National Institute for Empowerment of Person with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), Chennai**, under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MSJE), Govt. of India with an aim of creating resources and services required for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the State of Meghalaya.
- The Government of India has set up **CRCs in different parts of India, especially in the North Eastern States**. The CRC at Shillong is the 20th such institution and has become functional since July 19th 2021.
- CRC-Shillong provides the clinical services to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) like Special Education, Physiotherapy, Vocational Rehabilitation, Clinical Psychology, Orientation and Mobility training, Occupational Therapy, Speech & Hearing Services, Prosthetic & Orthotic services, Sensory Integration therapy, Guidance & Counseling and community-based rehabilitation services in Meghalaya.
- CRC Shillong also provides **Aids & Appliances to the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) under ADIP Scheme by organizing ADIP assessment and distribution camp**.
- Apart from providing clinical services, this organization is involved in creating awareness, developing resource materials, conducting outreach programs and implementing schemes of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, GOI.

18. Shri G Kishan Reddy took part in various discussions on tourism related themes during the first Incredible India International Cruise Conference 2022

- The first Incredible India International Cruise Conference 2022 was held on May 14th and May 15th, 2022 in Mumbai.
- The two-day conference showcased abundant business opportunities in the country's cruise tourism sector with an aim to **first showcase India as a desired destination for cruise passengers, highlight the regional connectivity, promote building of new destinations and attractions like lighthouses** and disseminate information about India's preparedness for developing the cruise tourism sector.
- The Ministry of Tourism currently **operates 3 major schemes and programs for the development of tourism related infrastructure that is SWADESH DARSHAN, PRASHAD and Central Financial Assistance**.
- The aim of the various sessions in the conference was to touch upon topics related to development of cruise circuits with focus on cruise destinations, cruise infrastructure, development of skilled manpower in tourism, hospitality and shipping, conducive policy environment and post-pandemic outlook and opportunities in cruise sector.

- For the development and promotion of cruise tourism, ministries and government agencies are working hand-in-hand.
- They are also involved in development of policy frameworks, SOPs for management and operation of cruise in international, domestic/coastal and river cruise sectors. Several initiatives are being taken towards upgradation and modernization of cruise terminals as per international standards.

19. RIL top-ranked Indian firm on the Forbes Global 2000 list

- Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd **climbed two spots to No. 53 on Forbes' latest Global 2000 list of public companies worldwide.**
- Forbes Global 2000 ranks the largest companies in the world using four metrics: **sales, profits, assets and market value, Forbes said releasing the 2022 ranking of the world's top 2,000 companies.**
- Reliance is the top-ranked Indian firm on the list, followed by **State Bank of India at No. 105, HDFC Bank at No. 153 and ICICI Bank at No. 204.**
- Other top 10 Indian firms on the list include state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) at 228 rank, Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd (HDFC) at No. 268, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) at No.357, Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) at No. 384, Tata Steel at No. 407 and Axis Bank at No. 431.
- **Energy and banking sector corporations were among the highest-ranking Indian companies** in Forbes' Global 2000 list of public companies this year.
- Oil-to-telecom-to-retail conglomerate Reliance, which recorded sales of USD 104.6 billion between April 2021 and March 2022, became the first Indian company to generate over USD 100 billion in annual revenue.
- On the Global 2000, Reliance climbed two spots to No. 53 among all public companies worldwide and ranked first among Indian companies.
- With a market cap of USD 56.12 billion, SBI grabbed the No. 2 spot on the list of India's largest. The bank, headquartered in Mumbai, has 24,000 branches and 62,617 ATMs across the country.
- Private sector banks ICICI and HDFC followed next on the Global 2000 list of Indian companies, highlighting the growth of the banking sector in India.
- Meanwhile, oil, gas and metal conglomerate Vedanta Limited jumped 703 spots on the list, the highest leap among all Indian companies thanks to a surge in price. It is ranked at 593. The Mumbai-headquartered company that mines aluminum saw a staggering rise in profits in 2021 after China's production declined.
- **Berkshire Hathaway took the No. 1 spot for the first time since Forbes started publishing the Global 2000 in 2003, dethroning the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, which dropped to No. 2 after nine consecutive years at the top of the list. Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco) took the 3 Spot.**

20. Varanasi to get Skill India International Centre to prepare skilled workforce for overseas employment

- **NSDC International (NSDCI) and the Indian unit of DP World, Hindustan Ports Private Limited** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop a Skill India International Centre at Varanasi to skill Indian youth for pursuing overseas employment opportunities in logistics, port operations and allied areas.
- Skill India International Centres are aimed at providing **high-quality training to Indian youth**. The centres would host training facilities, providing skills as per the demand of international employers in countries like United Arab Emirates (UAE), Canada, Australia and other GCC regions.
- The Skill India International Centres would also have a wide network of **partnering organisations and overseas recruiters to facilitate supply of skilled and certified workforce in other countries**. These partnering organisations will work with NSDCI for aggregating demand from overseas markets. The centres would offer services such as mobilisation, counselling, skill training, pre-departure orientation, foreign language training, placement and immigration and post-placement support.

21. PAN, Aadhaar mandatory for cash deposits or withdrawals above ₹20 lakh

- The government has made quoting of **PAN or Aadhaar mandatory from May 26 in case cash deposits and withdrawals in a financial year exceed ₹20 lakh**.
- A notification by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said "... the term transactions include deposit/withdrawal of cash amounting to ₹20 lakh or more in a financial year through one or more bank accounts. **Account(s) with not just commercial bank but even co-operative bank or post offices.**"

As per the new rules, furnishing PAN or Aadhaar will be compulsory in the following transactions:

- **Cash deposit or deposits aggregating to ₹20 lakh or more** in a financial year, in one or more accounts of a person with a banking company or a co-operative bank or a post office
- **Cash withdrawal or withdrawals** aggregating to ₹20 lakh or more in a financial year, in one or more accounts of a person with a banking company or a co-operative bank or a post office
- **Opening of a current account or cash credit account** by a person with a banking company or a co-operative bank or a post office
- Any person who intends to make these transactions should **apply for a PAN at least seven days before the date on which the transaction is intended to be made**.
- There is also a requirement for quoting PAN on bank deposits of over ₹50,000 made in one day.
- The CBDT has said that under the new rule PAN or Aadhaar, **with demographic or biometric information of an individual, shall be submitted to the principal director-general of Income Tax (Systems) or director-general of Income Tax (Systems), or the person authorised by either, for the purposes of authentication as referred to in section 139A.**

- The principal director-general or director-general shall lay down the format and standards along with procedure for authentication of PAN or Aadhaar.

22. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) partners with Indian School of Business (ISB) to further built capacity of officers from its ecosystem

- In line with the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's **ambitious programme 'Mission Karmayogi,' which is a first-of-its-kind experiment in the direction of capacity building and modernising the mindset, methodology, and skill set of government employees**, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) recently partnered with the Indian School of Business (ISB) to conduct capacity-building programmes for MSDE officials.
- A total of **120 officers (30 per batch) across divisions under MSDE would be undergoing a comprehensive five day long residential training across ISB Hyderabad and Mohali campuses**. The first batch of 30 officers have completed their training from ISB Mohali campus with a convocation ceremony held for the officers.
- The MSDE Management Development Programme is aimed at upskilling the MSDE officers facilitating capacity building training of a mixed batch of officials including officers from MSDE, Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) Principals, Sector Skill Councils, CEOs, State Skill Mission Directors, and Jan Sikshan Sansthan (JSS) & National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- The primary goal of the programme is to **strengthen leadership skills while developing a strategic mindset that will aid in gaining insights into data analytics and digital transformation**. Through strategic leadership and management development programmes, the MSDE and ISB are encouraging officials to instill a culture of innovation within their respective organisations.
- The batches are strategically designed to encourage cross-learning while embracing new challenges and comprehending complexities to ensure sustained success.
- Key initiatives undertaken by Capacity Building exercise at MSDE, induction programs for India Skill Development Service (ISDS) officers; self- defense training of all the MSDE women employees; 5 days Art of Living training program in stress management for 765 officials MSDE officials; and capacity building in management and leadership of 120 officials including officers from MSDE ecosystem.

23. ECI to lead Democracy Cohort on 'Election Integrity' in partnership with 100 Democratic Countries consequent to 'Summit for Democracy'

- A four-member **US delegation led by HE Ms. Uzra Zeya, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights** called upon Chief Election Commissioner Shri Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioner Shri Anup Chandra Pandey at Nirvachan Sadan.

- As part of 'Summit for Democracy', a decision has been **taken to request India to lead the 'Democracy Cohort on Election Integrity' and share its knowledge, technical expertise and experiences with other democracies of the world.**
- ECI has been requested to also **provide training and capacity building programmes to Election Management Bodies (EMBs) across the world and provide** technical consultancy as per needs of other EMBs.
- Discussions were held in the backdrop of '**Summit for Democracy' which started as a two-day virtual event, hosted by the United States in December 2021** and is now a year-long activity with events and dialogues on themes related to democracy with participating countries.
- Leaders of more than 100 countries including India, civil society organizations, private sector, media and others participated in the first summit. The Prime Minister of India also spoke at the Leaders Plenary Session on December 9, 2021.
- Following this Summit, a **"Year of Action" was proposed by the United States with events and dialogues on themes related to Democracy and to host an in-person 'Leaders' Summit for Democracy'** at the end of 2022.
- The US Government has also developed two platforms - '**Focal Groups' and 'Democracy Cohorts' to facilitate participation in the Year of Action.**
- **The 'Focal Groups' are for planning for the follow up Summit, proposing content for a summit outcome document, engaging with other participating Leaders on fulfilling their commitments,** leveraging regional and multilateral meetings or thematic conferences.
- The Embassy of India in the United States is representing the Government of India in this Group which was launched in Washington.
- The Democracy Cohorts platform is a thematic, multi-stakeholder group, open for official government and civil society participation. Other themes to be discussed under the Cohorts includes Free and Independent media, Fighting corruption, Bolstering democratic reformers, Advancing technology for democracy, Digital governance, Inclusive democracy, Disinformation, Anti-discrimination amongst others. These Cohorts would refine Summit's commitments, demonstrate progress on implementing those commitments, and develop new commitments for the follow up Summit.

24. Shri Piyush Goyal chairs the 4th meeting of National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC)

- The Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles, Shri Piyush Goyal today chaired **the 4th meeting of National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC) in New Delhi.**
- The Council deliberated upon important matters relating to startup ecosystem including protecting ownership of startups with original promoters, incorporating in India, listing in India, developing innovation hubs, etc.
- The members also shared progress on programs presented in earlier NSAC meetings including National Mentorship Program, Investor-Startup Matchmaking Portal, Incubator Capacity Development Program, etc.

- The Minister **launched NavIC Grand Challenge which aims at promoting adoption of NavIC as geo-positioning solution**, a key proponent for digital Aatmanirbharta. The applications for the grand challenge are open on Startup India's website (www.startupindia.gov.in) and it aims to identify and handhold solutions of startups which are engaged in developing NavIC enabled drones.
- **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) had constituted the National Startup Advisory Council to advise the Government** on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.
- Besides the ex-officio members, the council has non-official members, representing various stakeholders such as founders of successful startups, veterans who have grown and scaled companies in India, persons capable of representing interests of investors, incubators and accelerators into startups, representatives of associations of stakeholders of startups and representatives of industry associations.
- It is a one of its kind congregation wherein the policy making process is driven as part of collaboration between all the key stakeholders of the Startup ecosystem.
- During the course of the meeting, the members also shared many interesting insights and views about the startup ecosystem and gave recommendations as to how the ecosystem can be strengthened further through various initiatives and programmes.

25. WPI-based inflation at 15.08% for the month of April, 2022; Food Index inches up marginally to 8.88%

- Index Numbers of Wholesale Price in India for the Month of April, 2022 (Base Year: 2011-12)
- The annual rate of **inflation was 15.08% (Provisional) for the month of April, 2022 (Y-o-Y) as compared to 10.74% in April, 2021.**
- The rate of inflation based on WPI Food Index increased marginally from 8.71% in March, 2022 to 8.88% in April, 2022. The high rate of inflation in April, 2022 was primarily due to rise in prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum & natural gas, food articles, non-food articles, food products and chemicals & chemical products etc. as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year.
- **The Office of the Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade released the index numbers of wholesale price in India** (Base Year: 2011-12) for the month of April, 2022 (Provisional) and for the month of February, 2022 (Final).
- Provisional figures of Wholesale Price Index (WPI) are **released on 14th of every month (or next working day) with a time lag of two weeks of the reference month** and compiled with data received from institutional sources and selected manufacturing units across the country. After 10 weeks, the index is finalized and final figures are released and then frozen thereafter.

26. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan called for a “Malviya Mission” to set up nation-wide ecosystem for faculty development

- Union Minister of Education Shri **Dharmendra Pradhan** today reviewed the report on institutional mechanism for **capacity building of teacher/faculty** in higher education institutes. Minister Pradhan pitched in with an idea of a “Malviya Mission” to develop enabling ecosystem across the country for teacher education/faculty development.
- He said that a **multi-dimensional approach to upskill faculty aligned with the challenges of the 21st century India must be adopted**. Mentioning the focus of National Education Policy 2020 on teacher education, he called for a multidisciplinary approach towards teacher education with focus on Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions.

27. Incredible India International Cruise Conference

- Mumbai Port Authority under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, the Government of India is organizing the International Cruise Conference on 14th and 15th May 2022 in Mumbai.
- The conference will be inaugurated by Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and AYUSH, Government of India. FICCI is the exclusive industry partner. The theme of **Conference is “Developing India as a Cruise Hub”**.

Aim of Conference:

- To disseminate the information about India’s preparedness for developing the Cruise Tourism Sector.
- To present to the Cruise Lines and Operators an overview of the many and varied facilities and attractions, India has to offer.
- To showcase India as a desirable destination for cruise passengers, highlight the regional connectivity and also promote building new destinations.
- To create an enabling and conducive environment for cruise lines to exchange views with the government authorities for operating in the region.
- To brainstorm with important stakeholders and sensitize them for developing policies, procedures, and processes to encourage cruise tourism in India.
- To encourage the additional deployment of cruise vessels to India on a long-term basis.

28. Five Indian start-ups join World Economic Forum’s tech pioneer community

- **Five Indian start-ups were among the 100 new start-ups to join the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Technology Pioneers Community**. These start-ups are expected to forge new paths in various sectors such as healthcare and food production.
- Full stack labour marketplace for blue collar workers, **Vahan**, was one of the Indian start-ups to join the community. Along with it is **Pandocorp**, the world's first open-market freight management platform, plant-based protein

ingredient innovator **Proeon**, Asia's first circular economy marketplace **Recykal**, and **SmartCoin Financials**, a tech-driven financial inclusion platform empowering the underserved.

- Founded in 2016 by Madhav Krishna, Vahan is a technology company headquartered in Bangalore that companies such as Zomato, Swiggy, Flipkart, Uber, Shadowfax etc. hire blue-collar workers. They are backed by investors such as Y Combinator, Khosla Ventures, Founders Fund and Airtel.
- Pandocorp was founded by Nitin Jayakrishnan, Pandocorp offers “network-powered all-in-one freight automation for fast growing businesses”. Founded by Ashish Korde and Kevin Parekh, Proeon aims to “enable healthier eating, conscious consumption, and cruelty-free food practices for long-term impact”.
- Recykal is an end-to-end digital solutions provider that facilitates transactions for all stakeholders across the country’s waste management and recycling value chain. It was founded by Abhay Deshpande.
- SmartCoin Financials, co-founded by Rohit Garg, Amit Chandel, Vinay Kumar Singh, and Jayant Upadhyay, aims to solve the problem of financial inclusion through technology.
- The 2022 cohort of Technology Pioneers is already **bringing great changes to industries around the world. By joining this community these emerging tech leaders can continue** to show not only the impressive tech advancements within their firms but also how their companies are helping to build a better future for us all.
- The WEF stated that for the first time, over one-third of the selected firms are led by women, which is well above the industry average. The 2022 Tech Pioneers are based in 30 countries, with Vietnam, Rwanda ad Czech Republic being represented for the first time ever.

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INDIAN STARTUPS AMONG WEF'S TECH PIONEERS

Five Indian names were among the 100 new startups to join the World Economic Forum's Technology Pioneers Community.



Vahan, full stack labour marketplace for blue collar workers



Pandocorp, world's first open-market freight management platform



Proeon, plant-based protein ingredient innovator



SmartCoin Financials, tech-driven financial inclusion platform for the underserved



Recykal, Asia's first circular economy marketplace

Source: World Economic Forum



29. Lending by Commercial Banks to NBFCs and Small Finance Banks (SFBs) to NBFC-MFIs, for the purpose of on-lending to priority sectors

- Lending by commercial banks to NBFCs and **lending by Small Finance Banks (SFBs) to NBFC-MFIs, for the purpose of on-lending to certain priority sectors**, was permitted up to March 31, 2022.
- To ensure continuation of the synergies that have been developed between banks and NBFCs in delivering credit to the **specified priority sectors**, it has been decided to allow the above facility on an on-going basis.
- Bank credit to NBFCs (including HFCs) for on-lending **will be allowed up to an overall limit of 5 percent of an individual bank's total priority sector lending in case of commercial banks**.
- In case of SFBs, credit to NBFC-MFIs and other MFIs (Societies, Trusts, etc.) which are members of RBI recognized 'Self-Regulatory Organisation' of the sector, **will be allowed up to an overall limit of 10 percent of an individual bank's total priority sector lending**. These limits shall be computed by averaging across four quarters of the financial year, to determine adherence to the prescribed cap.

- SFBs are allowed to lend to registered NBFC-MFIs and other MFIs **which have a 'gross loan portfolio' (GLP) of up to ₹500 crore as on March 31 of the previous financial year**, for the purpose of on-lending to priority sector.
- In case the GLP of the NBFC-MFIs/other MFIs exceeds the stipulated limit at a later date, all priority sector loans created prior to exceeding the GLP limit will continue to be classified by the SFBs as PSL till repayment/maturity, whichever is earlier.

30. India remains world's top remittance recipient

- India has once emerged as the **largest remittance receiving country in 2021, while Mexico pushed China to the third slot, according to the World Bank.**
- India received remittances worth over **\$89 billion in 2021, which was a healthy 8 per cent higher than the \$ 82.73 billion in 2020.**
- Despite the world having been affected badly by Covid in 2020, the remittances in that year were a shade over the \$82.69 billion in the non-Covid year of 2019. Some of the increase is accounted for by the falling value of the rupee vis-à-vis the dollar.
- For the current year too, India's inbound remittances will continue to rise, helped by one of the lowest transaction costs in the world. Globally, the average cost of sending \$200 is 6 per cent, but it is cheapest to send money to South Asia (4.3%) and most expensive to send to Sub-Saharan Africa (7.8%).
- In total, remittance flows to low and middle-income countries are expected to increase by 4.2 per cent to reach \$630 billion in 2022.

31. Frauds in PSBs dip 51% t Rs 40,295 cr, cases not falling fast enough: RBI

- Public sector banks reported **over 51 per cent dip in the amount involved in frauds to Rs 40,295.25 crore** during the financial year ended March 2022, the Reserve Bank of India has said.
- The 12 PSBs (Public Sector Banks) had **reported frauds worth Rs 81,921.54 crore in preceding fiscal 2020-21**, the Reserve Bank has said in response to an application under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.
- However, the number of fraud cases didn't fall at the same pace as a total of 7,940 frauds reported by the PSBs in 2021-22, against 9,933 incidents reported in FY21, said the RBI's reply to Madhya Pradesh-based RTI activist Chandrashekhar Gaur.
- According to the RBI data **on frauds reported by PSBs in all categories during FY22, the highest amount of Rs 9,528.95 crore was reported by the city-based Punjab National Bank (PNB)**, involving 431 such incidents.
- The country's largest lender State Bank of India reported frauds worth Rs 6,932.37 crore in as many as 4,192 cases -- reflecting incidents of a large number of small value frauds.

- Bank of India reported frauds worth Rs 5,923.99 crore (209 incidents), followed by Bank of Baroda at Rs 3,989.36 crore (280); Union Bank of India Rs 3,939 crore (627), while Canara Bank reported frauds worth Rs 3,230.18 crore in just 90 cases -- showing that the transactions were of high value frauds.
- Among others, Indian Bank customers faced frauds amounting to Rs 2,038.28 crore in 211 cases; Indian Overseas Bank Rs 1,733.80 crore (312); Bank of Maharashtra Rs 1,139.36 crore (72 cases); Central Bank of India Rs 773.37 crore; UCO Bank Rs 611.54 crore (114 crore) and Punjab & Sind Bank reported frauds of Rs 455.04 crore in as many as 159 incidents.
- RBI said that the data may change subject to rectification/update made subsequent to first reporting of banks (in respect of individual frauds). As per the RBI reply, the amount of frauds worth less than Rs 1 lakh has been recorded from April 1, 2017.

32. World bank sanctions USD 350 billion to Gujarat to boost health services

- The World Bank delegation called upon Gujarat Health Minister Hrishikesh Patel to discuss the implementation of **Systems Reform Endeavours for Transformed Health Achievement in Gujarat (SRESTHA-G)** and sanctioned **USD 350 billion to the state under the project to improve the health facilities and services.**
- The representative of the World Bank praised the **health infrastructure of Gujarat and expressed their desire to participate in the vision to make the health facilities better.**
- Under the SRESTHA-Gujarat project, the government will undertake the initiative to improve the quality of the health system of the state by expanding the health services to the rural and urban people and strengthening the epidemic prevention system of the state.
- The project also focuses to **increase the quality of non-communicable and psychiatric services in the state as well as the quality of mother and child nutrition services.**
- The five-year total cost of the **project will be around USD 500 billion which is approximately Rs 3,750 crore.** Of this, USD 350 billion which is approximately Rs 2,625 crore, will be provided by the World Bank. While Gujarat will spend Rs 1125 crore in five years.

33. Sebi notifies rules to strengthen the regulatory framework for CIS

- Currently, CIS rules do not mandate a minimum number of investors, maximum holding of a single investor, or minimum subscription amount
- The rules, first notified in 1999, have not been reviewed since then.
- To strengthen the regulatory framework for collective investment schemes, **market regulator Sebi has enhanced the net worth criteria and track record requirements for entities managing such schemes.**
- Also, the regulator **has mandated a minimum of 20 investors and a subscription amount of at least Rs 20 crore for each Collective Investment Scheme (CIS).**

- Currently, CIS rules do not mandate a minimum number of investors, maximum holding of a single investor, or minimum subscription amount.
- In addition, the regulator has put a cap on cross-shareholding in Collective Investment Management Company (CIMC) to 10 percent to avoid conflict of interest.
- To give this effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has amended CIS regulations. The rules, first notified in 1999, have not been reviewed since then.
- The move comes after the board of Sebi approved a proposal in this regard in its board meeting in March.
- The new rule is aimed at strengthening the regulatory framework for collective investment schemes as well as empowering the CIMCs to effectively discharge their responsibilities toward the investors.
- CIS is a pooled investment vehicle in closed-ended investment space and the units of the schemes are listed on an exchange.
- The structure of CIS is a two-tier one as there are two entities involved in the process -- the CIMC and trustees. CIMC is created to float and manage a CIS and the trustee is appointed as guardian of the funds and assets.
- Regarding eligibility criteria, Sebi said applicants or promoters should have a soundtrack record and a general reputation of fairness and integrity in all their business transactions.
- The applicant should have been carrying out business in the relevant field in which CIS schemes are proposed to be launched, for at least five years; net worth should be positive in all the immediately preceding five years and should have profits in three out of the five years.
- CIMCs are required to have a minimum net worth of Rs 50 crore as compared to the present requirement of Rs 5 crore.
- The applicant has a net worth of not less than Rs 50 crore continuously: Provided that the applicant shall have a net worth not less than Rs 100 crore till it has profits for five consecutive years", in case the requirements related to profit are not fulfilled.
- Under the new framework, each CIS will have a minimum subscription amount of Rs 20 crore and each CIS needs to have a minimum of 20 investors and no single investor will hold more than 25 percent of the assets under management of such schemes.
- To avoid the conflict of interest, the regulator has restricted a CIMC and its group/ associates/shareholders' shareholding in a scheme at 10 percent or representation on the board of a rival CIMC.
- Besides, the mandatory investment of CIMC and its designated employees in the CIS has to align their interests with that of the CIS.
- Also, Sebi said CIS will not be open for subscription for more than 15 days. However, the scheme may be kept open for subscription for a maximum of another 15 days subject to the issuance of a public notice by the CIMC before the expiry of the initial 15 days. At present, the limit is for 90 days.

- Further, the regulator has rationalized fees and expenses to be charged for the scheme. Also, unit certificates against acceptance of the application will be allotted as soon as possible but not later than five working days from the date of closure of the initial subscription list.

34. Cabinet empowers the Board of Directors of the Holding / Parent Public Sector Enterprises to recommend and undertake the process for Disinvestment/Closure of their subsidiaries / units / stake in JVs and additional delegation of powers to Alternative Mechanism

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal for empowering the Board of **Directors of the Holding / Parent Public Sector Enterprises to recommend and undertake the process for Disinvestment** (both strategic disinvestment and minority stake sale) or closure of any of their subsidiaries / units / stake in JVs.
- The Cabinet has also empowered **Alternative Mechanism to accord 'in principle' approval for disinvestment** (both strategic disinvestment and minority take sale) / closure of subsidiaries / units / sale of stakes in JVs of Holding / Parent PSEs [except the disinvestment (minority stake sale) of Maharatna PSEs which was delegated to them and review the process of disinvestment / closure by Parent / Holding PSEs.
- The process for undertaking the **strategic disinvestment transactions / closures to be followed by the PSEs should be open, based on the principles of competitive bidding** and consistent with the guiding principles to be laid down.
- **For strategic disinvestment, such guiding principles will be laid down by DIPAM. For closure, DPE shall issue guiding principles.**
- Presently, **the Board of Directors of Holding / Parent PSEs have been delegated certain powers under the Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna categories to make equity investment** to establish financial joint ventures and wholly-owned subsidiaries and undertake mergers / acquisitions subject to certain ceilings of net-worth.
- However, the Boards do not have powers for disinvestment / closure of their subsidiaries / units/ stake in JVs, except some limited powers given to **Maharatna PSEs for minority stake disinvestment of shareholding in their subsidiaries.**
- Therefore, approval of the Cabinet / CCEA was needed by Holding / Parent CPSEs, for disinvestment (both strategic disinvestment and minority stake sale) / closure of their subsidiaries / units or sale of their stakes in a JV, irrespective of the size of operations / capital deployed of such subsidiaries, etc.
- In line with the spirit of the new PSE policy, 2021 to minimize presence of Government PSEs and for functional requirement, further delegation in this matter have been provided through this decision.
- The proposal intends to reform the functioning of PSEs, by allowing greater autonomy to the Board of Directors of the Holding PSEs for taking decisions and recommend for timely existing from their investment in Subsidiaries / Units or JVs, which will enable them to monetize their investment in such subsidiaries/units/JVs at an opportune time or

close their loss-making and inefficient subsidiary/unit/JV at right time. This will result in expeditious decision making and saving of wasteful operational/financial expenditure by the PSEs.

35. Shri Bhagwant Khuba, Union Minister of State for Chemicals & Fertilizers and New & Renewable Energy inaugurates “Industry Connect with Centre of Excellence Conclave”

- Minister of State, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers; and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Govt. of India – Shri Bhagwanth Khuba inaugurated the “**Industry Connect with Centre of Excellence Conclave under DCPC**” at **Habitat World, India Habitat Centre**, New Delhi.
- The event was organised by **Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET) under Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals (DCPC)**.
- Acknowledging the efforts of DCPC and CIPET in organizing the event to showcase the findings, identify suitable Industry Partner and understanding the future requirements of the Industry.
- CoEs are working in the areas of Energy Efficient Devices, Eco-Friendly Polymeric Products, Waste Management and Recycling, Smart Polymers, Polymers in Health Care etc, thereby facilitate technology indigenization and hence, start-ups.
- In future the research outcomes of these projects will make India a hub for indigenous technologies. Projects like one on Biomedical devices & toys will make India less import dependent and thereby save foreign exchange for us.

36. Cabinet approves Amendments to the National Policy on Biofuels -2018

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the Amendments to the National Policy on Biofuels -2018.
- The “National Policy on Biofuels - 2018” was notified by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on 04.06.2018 in supersession of National Policy on Biofuels, promulgated through the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, in 2009.
- Due to advancements in the field of Biofuels, various decisions taken in the National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) **meetings to increase biofuel production, recommendation of the Standing Committee and the decision to advance to introduce Ethanol Blended Petrol** with up to twenty per cent ethanol throughout the country from 01.04.2023, amendments are done to the National Policy on Biofuels.

The following are the main amendments approved to the National Policy on Biofuels:

- to allow more feedstocks for production of biofuels,
- to advance the ethanol blending target of 20% blending of ethanol in petrol to ESY 2025-26 from 2030,
- to promote the production of biofuels in the country, under the Make in India program, by units located in Special Economic Zones (SEZ)/ Export Oriented Units (EoUs),
- to add new members to the NBCC.

- to grant permission for export of biofuels in specific cases, and
- to delete/amend certain phrases in the Policy in line with decisions taken during the meetings of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- This proposal will also **attract and foster developments of indigenous technologies** which will pave the way for Make in India drive and thereby generate more employment.
- The existing National Policy on Biofuels came up during year 2018. This **amendment proposal will pave the way for Make in India drive thereby leading to reduction in import of petroleum** products by generation of more and more biofuels. Since many more feedstocks are being allowed for production of biofuels, this will promote the Atmanirbhar Bharat and give an impetus to Prime Minister's vision of India becoming 'energy independent' by 2047.

37. The State of Inequality in India Report released

- The State of Inequality in India Report was released by Dr Bibek Debroy, Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).
- The report has been written by **the Institute for Competitiveness and presents a holistic analysis of the depth and nature of inequality in India.**
- The report compiles information on inequities across sectors of health, education, household characteristics and the labour market. As the report presents, inequities in these sectors make the population more vulnerable and triggers a descent into multidimensional poverty.
- Consisting of two parts – **Economic Facets and Socio-Economic Manifestations** – the report looks at **five key areas that influence the nature** and experience of inequality.
- These are **income distribution and labour market dynamics, health, education and household characteristics.**
- Based on the data derived from various rounds of the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) and UDISE+**, each chapter is dedicated to explaining the current state of affairs, areas of concern, successes and failures in terms of infrastructural capacity and finally, the effect on inequality.
- The report stretches the **narrative on inequality by presenting a comprehensive analysis that shapes the ecosystem of various deprivation** in the country, which directly impacts the well-being of the population and overall growth. It is a study that cuts across the intersections of class, gender, and region and highlights how inequality affects the society.
- The report moves beyond the wealth estimates that **depict only a partial picture to highlight estimates of income distribution over the periods of 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20.**
- With a first-time focus on income distribution to understand the capital flow, the report emphasises that wealth concentration as a measure of inequality does not reveal the changes in the purchasing capacity of households.
- Extrapolation of the income data from PLFS 2019-20 has shown that a **monthly salary of Rs 25,000 is already amongst the top 10% of total incomes earned**, pointing towards some levels of income disparity.

- The share of the **top 1% accounts for 6-7% of the total incomes earned, while the top 10% accounts for one-third of all incomes earned.**
- In 2019-20, among different employment categories, **the highest percentage was of self-employed workers (45.78%), followed by regular salaried workers (33.5%) and casual workers (20.71%).** The share of self-employed workers also happens to be the highest in the lowest income categories. The country's unemployment rate is 4.8% (2019-20), and the worker population ratio is 46.8%.
- In the area of health infrastructure, there has been a **considerable improvement in increasing the infrastructural capacity with a targeted focus on rural areas.** From 1,72,608 total health centres in India in 2005, total health centres in 2020 stand at 1,85,505.
- States and Union Territories like **Rajasthan, Gujrat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Chandigarh have significantly increased health centres** (comprising of Sub-Centres, Primary Health Centres, and Community Health Centres) between 2005 and 2020.
- The results of NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-21) have shown that 58.6% of women received antenatal check-ups in the first trimester in 2015-16, which increased to 70% by 2019-21.
- 78% of women received postnatal care from a doctor or auxiliary nurse within two days of delivery, and 79.1% of children received postnatal care within two days of delivery.
- However, nutritional deprivation in terms of overweight, underweight, and prevalence of anaemia (especially in children, adolescent girls and pregnant women) remains areas of huge concern requiring urgent attention, as the report states. Additionally, low health coverage, leading to high out-of-pocket expenditure, directly affects poverty incidences.
- According to the report, education and household conditions have improved enormously due to targeted efforts through several social protection schemes, especially in the area of water availability and sanitation that have increased the standard of living.
- It is emphasised that education and cognitive development from the foundational years is a long-term corrective measure for inequality. By 2019-20, 95% of schools have functional toilet facilities on the school premises (95.9% functional boy's toilets and 96.9% functional girl's toilets). 80.16% of schools have functional electricity connections with States and Union Territories like Goa, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh, Delhi, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep and Puducherry have achieved universal (100%) coverage of functional electricity connections.
- The Gross Enrolment Ratio has also increased between 2018-19 and 2019-20 at the primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary. In terms of improvement in household conditions, emphasis on providing access to sanitation and safe drinking water has meant leading a dignified life for most households. According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), 97% of households have electricity access, 70% have improved access to sanitation, and 96% have access to safe drinking water.

- The information available on inequality, which this report brings out, will help formulate reform strategies, a roadmap for social progress and shared prosperity. Recommendations like creating income slabs that provide class information, establishing universal basic income, creating jobs, especially among the higher levels of education and increasing the budget for social protection schemes have been made.

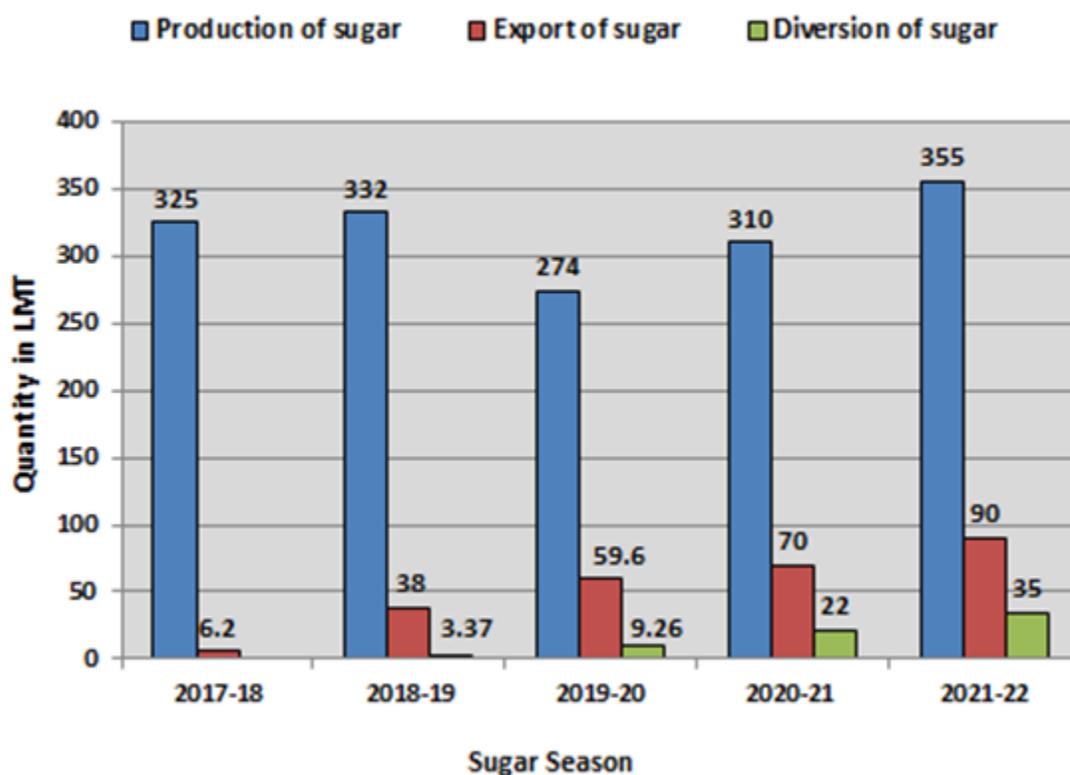
38. Third Advance Estimates for Production of Major Crops 2021-22 released

- The third advance estimates of production of major **agricultural crops for the year 2021-22 have been released by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**
- The production of Foodgrains in the country is estimated at record **314.51 million tonnes which is higher by 3.77 million tonnes** than the production of foodgrain during 2020-21.
- The production during **2021-22 is higher by 23.80 million tonnes than the previous five years'** (2016-17 to 2020-21) average production of foodgrains.
- Record production is estimated of rice, maize, pulses, oilseeds, gram, rapeseed and mustard and sugarcane.
- The assessment of **production of different crops is based on the data received from States and validated with information available from other sources.**
- The estimated production of various crops as per the 3rd Advance Estimates for 2021-22 vis-à-vis the comparative estimates for the years 2007-08 onwards is enclosed.
- As per 3rd Advance Estimates for 2021-22, total Foodgrains production in the country is estimated at **record 314.51 million tonnes which is higher by 3.77 million tonnes than the production of foodgrain during 2020-21.** Further, the production during 2021-22 is higher by 23.80 million tonnes than the previous five years' (2016-17 to 2020-21) average production of foodgrains.
- Total production of Rice during 2021-22 is estimated at record 129.66 million tonnes. It is higher by 13.23 million tonnes than the last five years' average production of 116.43 million tonnes.
- Production of Wheat during 2021-22 is estimated at 106.41 million tonnes. It is higher by 2.53 million tonnes than the last five years' average wheat production of 103.88 million tonnes.
- Production of **Nutri / Coarse Cereals estimated at 50.70 million tonnes**, which is higher by 4.12 million tonnes than the last five years' average production of 46.57 million tonnes.
- **Total Pulses production during 2021-22 is estimated at record 27.75 million tonnes** which is higher by 3.92 million tonnes than the last five years' average production of 23.82 million tonnes.
- **Total Oilseeds production in the country during 2021-22 is estimated at record 38.50 million tonnes** which is higher by 2.55 million tonnes than the production of 35.95 million tonnes during 2020-21. Further, the production of oilseeds during 2021-22 is higher by 5.81 million tonnes than the average oilseeds production.
- Total production of Sugarcane in the country during 2021-22 is estimated at record 430.50 million tonnes which is higher by 57.04 million tonnes than the average sugarcane production of 373.46 million tonnes.

- Production of Cotton and Jute & Mestais estimated at 31.54 million bales (each of 170 kg) and 10.22 million bales (each of 180 kg), respectively.

39. Export of sugar in sugar season 2021-22 is 15 times that of 2017-18

- Export of sugar in current sugar season **2021-22 is 15 times of export as compared to export in sugar season 2017-18.**
- The **major importing countries are Indonesia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, UAE, Malaysia and African Countries.**
- In sugar seasons 2017-18, 2018-19 & 2019-20, about 6.2 LMT, 38 LMT & 59.60 LMT of sugar was exported. **In sugar season 2020-21 against target of 60 LMT about 70 LMT have been exported.**
- About Rs 14,456 Cr released to sugar mills in past 5 years to facilitate export of sugar & Rs. 2000 cr as carrying cost for maintaining buffer stock. Since, the international prices of sugar are in uptrend & stable, so, contracts for export of about 90 LMT have been signed to export sugar in current sugar season 2021-22 & that too without announcement of any export subsidy; out of which 75 LMT have been exported till 18.05.2022.
- In order to find a permanent solution to address the problem of excess sugar, Government is encouraging sugar mills to divert excess sugarcane to ethanol.
- With the vision to boost agricultural economy, to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuel, to save foreign exchange on account of crude oil import bill & to reduce the air pollution, Government has fixed target of 10% blending of fuel grade ethanol with petrol by 2022 & 20% blending by 2025.
- Till year 2014, **ethanol distillation capacity of molasses-based distilleries was only about 215 cr litres.** However, in past 8 years due to the policy changes made by the Government, the capacity of molasses-based distilleries has been increased to 569 cr litres.
- Capacity of grain-based distilleries which was 206 cr ltrs in 2014 has increased to 298 cr ltrs. Thus, the total ethanol production capacities have increased from 421 cr ltrs to 867 cr ltrs in just 8 years.
- Supply of ethanol to OMCs was only 38 crore litres with blending levels of only 1.53 % in ethanol supply year (ESY) 2013-14. Production of fuel grade ethanol and its supply to OMCs has increased by 8 times from 2013-14 to 2020-21. In ethanol supply year 2020-21 (December - November), about 302.30 cr ltrs of ethanol has been supplied to OMCs thereby, achieving 8.1% blending levels, which is historically highest.
- In the current ESY 2021-22, about 186 cr ltrs ethanol have been blended with petrol till 08.05.2022 thereby achieving 9.90% blending. It is expected that in current ethanol supply year 2021-22, we will be achieving 10% blending target.



- With a view to support sugar sector and in the interest of sugarcane farmers, the Government has also allowed production of ethanol from B-Heavy Molasses, sugarcane juice, sugar syrup and sugar. Government has been fixing remunerative ex-mill price of ethanol derived from C-heavy & B-heavy molasses & ethanol derived from sugarcane juice/ sugar/ sugar syrup for ethanol season to encourage mills to divert excess sugarcane to ethanol.
- In sugar seasons 2018-19 , 2019-20 & 2020-21 about 3.37, 9.26 & 22 LMT of sugar was diverted to ethanol. In sugar season 2021-22, it is likely that about 35 LMT of excess sugar would be diverted to ethanol. By 2025, it is targeted to divert more than 60 LMT of excess sugar to ethanol, which would solve the problem of high inventories of sugar, improve liquidity of mills thereby help in timely payment of cane dues of farmers.
- Since, 2014 more than Rs. 64,000 cr revenue has been generated by sugar mills & distilleries from sale of ethanol to OMCs which has helped in making timely payment of dues of farmers.

40. World Bee Day celebrated in Gujarat in the presence of Union Agriculture Minister

- World Bee Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm with the Union Agriculture Minister stating that the government is working very seriously under the guidance of Prime Minister to bring about a “Sweet Revolution” in the country.
- On this occasion, a national level function was organized in Tent City-II, Ekta Nagar, Narmada, Gujarat in the presence of Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister.

- Shri Tomar inaugurated an Exhibition at the venue of event as well as Honey Testing Laboratories and Processing Units at Pulwama, Bandipura and Jammu in Jammu and Kashmir, Tumkur in Karnataka, Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, Pune in Maharashtra and Uttarakhand in a virtual mode from Gujarat.
- The centrally funded scheme, **‘National Beekeeping and Honey Mission’** aims to establish **5 big regional and 100 small honey and other Bee Products testing laboratories**, out of which 3 world class state-of-the-art laboratories have been setup, whereas 25 small laboratories are in the process of being set up.
- The Government of India is also providing assistance **for setting up of Processing Units**. More than **1.25 lakh metric tonnes of honey is being produced in the country**, out of which more than 60 thousand metric tonnes of natural honey is exported.
- In order to bring qualitative upgradation of domestic honey to attract the world market, the Government of India and the State Governments are making concerted efforts and focusing on capacity building of bee keepers for production of honey by adopting scientific techniques.

41. India gets the highest annual FDI inflow of USD 83.57 billion in FY21-22

- India has recorded **highest ever annual FDI inflow of USD 83.57 billion in the Financial Year 2021-22**. In 2014-2015, FDI inflow in India stood at mere 45.15 USD billion as compared to the highest ever annual FDI inflow of USD 83.57 billion reported during the financial year 2021-22 overtaking last year’s FDI by USD 1.60 billion despite military operation in Ukraine and COVID-19 pandemic. India’s FDI inflows have increased 20-fold since FY03-04, when the inflows were USD 4.3 billion only.
- The details of total FDI inflows reported during the last four financial years are as under:

S. No.	Financial Year	Amount of FDI inflows (in USD billion)
1.	2018-19	62.00
2.	2019-20	74.39
3.	2020-21	81.97
4.	2021-22	83.57

- Further, **India is rapidly emerging as a preferred country for foreign investments in the manufacturing sector.** FDI Equity inflow in Manufacturing Sectors have increased by 76% in FY 2021-22 (USD 21.34 billion) compared to the previous FY 2020-21 (USD 12.09 billion).
- The following trends in India's Foreign Direct Investment inflow are an endorsement of its status as a preferred investment destination amongst global investors.
- It may be noted that FDI inflow has increased by 23% post-Covid (March, 2020 to March 2022: USD 171.84 billion) in comparison to FDI inflow reported pre-Covid (February, 2018 to February, 2020: USD 141.10 billion) in India.
- In terms of top investor countries of FDI Equity inflow, **'Singapore' is at the apex with 27%, followed by U.S.A (18%) and Mauritius (16%) for the FY 2021-22.**
- **'Computer Software & Hardware' has emerged as the top recipient sector of FDI Equity inflow** during FY 2021-22 with around 25% share followed by Services Sector (12%) and Automobile Industry (12%) respectively.
- Under the sector `Computer Software & Hardware', the major recipient states of FDI Equity inflow are **Karnataka (53%), Delhi (17%) and Maharashtra (17%)** during FY 2021-22.
- **Karnataka is the top recipient state with 38% share of the total FDI Equity inflow** reported during the FY 2021-22 followed by Maharashtra (26%) and Delhi (14%). Majority of the equity inflow of Karnataka has been reported in the sectors `Computer Software & Hardware' (35%), Automobile Industry (20%) and `Education' (12%) during the FY 2021-22.

42. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued to maintain desired quality standards for implementation of 'Rice Fortification'

- The Department of Food and Public Distribution is working tirelessly to ensure implementation of **'Rice Fortification' to address malnutrition, anaemia and micronutrient deficiencies.**
- The storage and research division of the department, is also overseeing the quality standards of finished product from procurement to its **distribution through various social security programmes as well as self-declared quality certification from the end of FRK** (Fortified Rice Kernels) manufacturers/millers etc.
- For smooth implementation of entire programme/to maintain the desired quality standards under domestic supply chain, a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has also been formulated and issued by the Department in March, 2022.**
- In order to **maintain the desired quality standards of Fortified Rice Kernels and Fortified Rice, the SOP clearly narrates the level-wise role & responsibilities of various stakeholders** engaged under the ambitious scheme from FRK manufacturing to its distribution to the eligible beneficiaries.
- And while the role and responsibilities of various stakeholders are defined by the **Department, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is also playing a vital role** in the entire programme.

- Initially FSSAI, notified the standards for fortified food including rice also via Food Safety Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulation, 2018, Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011 etc.
- FSSAI, **empanelled the FRK (Fortified Rice Kernels) manufacturers/licensed them, developed various quality certification standards/guidelines for packaging and stencilling of finished product**, guidelines on sampling, Technical hand out on Fortification of Rice etc. for various operational accomplishment.
- FSSAI is also mapping **the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL)** accredited labs under the states which may test the various quality parameters of FRK/FR.
- Promotional and regularity roles are also undertaken by the FSSAI's Food Safety Officer (FSO). These officers are picking random samples from the mill and from fair price shops to ensure the quality of fortified rice (such that it covers all the shops and mills under his/her supervision in a quarter).
- **Food Fortification Resource Centre (FFRC) a unit of FSSAI, which is functioning as a resource hub for fortification** will provide any kind of assistance to the Food Business Operators (FBO), Millers, States, FCI etc/facilitate training & capacity building (FBO's, rice millers, FPS owners, FSO's etc.) and monitor & evaluate the programme with support from development partners.
- FSSAI is a resource hub which provides information and inputs on standards and food safety, technology and processes, premix and equipment procurement and manufacture, quality assurance and quality control for fortified rice.
- Rice fortification, a process of adding **micronutrients like Iron, Folic Acid and Vitamin B12, is an effective, preventive and cost-efficient complementary strategy** to address the challenge of anaemia. There are various studies from the global as well as Indian context, including pilot projects, which have proven the efficacy of fortified rice as an effective intervention to address anaemia.
- Fortification is the process of increasing the content of essential micronutrients i.e. Vitamins and Minerals (including trace elements) to food so as to improve its nutritional quality and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- **Food fortification is regarded as one of the top-three priorities for developing countries as per the Copenhagen Consensus Statement, 2008.**
- Fortified foods are in fact not new to India. In India, consumption of Iodized Salt, also a type of fortified food, has led to the reduction in prevalence of Iodine Deficiency Disorders and diseases such as Goitre. Rice fortification is also a viable preventive and complementary intervention to solve the problem of anaemia in a short period of span.

43. DG, NMCG Chairs 42nd meeting of the Executive Committee; Approves 11 Projects Worth Rs. 660 crores

- The 42nd meeting of the Executive Committee of National Mission for Clean Ganga was organised on under the **chairmanship of Shri G. Asok Kumar, DG, NMCG.**

- The committee approved **11 projects during the meeting with an estimated cost of around Rs. 660** crores.
- Among the project which were approved are 'Interception, Diversion and Treatment Works for Saharanpur Town' for River Hindon, 'Rejuvenation of Chamunda Mai Pond' in Garh Mukhteshwar, 'Environmental Upgradation of Shivna River' in Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh, 'Evaluation of Natural Farming Practices on Water and Energy Savings', and 'Implementation of Membrane-based soil-less agriculture'.
- Two projects pertaining to crematoriums including 'Construction of Electric Crematorium' at Kalyani, West Bengal and 'Development of Cremation Ghat' at Paudi Garhwal were also approved. In addition to this, two projects of River Front Development in Badrinath were also given a go ahead. Two big projects for Septage Management in Uttarakhand and West Bengal were also approved in the meeting.
- A big project of sewerage management for cleaning of River Hindon in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh was approved. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 577.23 crore that includes construction of 135 MLD STP, creation of interception and diversion structures and laying of sewer line etc. was approved during the EC meeting. Cleaning of Ganga's tributaries has been the prime focus of Namami Gange Programme.
- Recognizing the need of Faecal Sludge and Septage Management for effective de-centralized wastewater treatment, NMCG approved two projects of Septage Management in the meeting. While one project 'Co-treatment of Septage at existing STPs of Haridwar (150 KLD), Rishikesh (50 KLD), Srinagar (30 KLD) and Dev Prayag (5 KLD)' covers the State of Uttarakhand, another project 'Integrated Septage Treatment Plant for Burdwan Municipality' focuses on prevention of flow of sewage in River Banka, a tributary of Ganga in West Bengal. The estimated costs of these projects are Rs. 8.6 crore and Rs. 6.46 crore respectively including operation and maintenance of the Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) for 5 years. The principal objective of these project is to further improve the water quality of river Ganga by avoiding the discharge of untreated Septage from un-sewered areas.
- The major component of the '**Environmental Upgradation of Shivna River**' in Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh costing Rs. 28.68 crore include prevention of pollution from point and non-point source, construction of ghat, development of crematorium and idol immersion facility. The project envisages abatement of pollution in the river and improve the environmental conditions of Shivna River.
- The project on '**Rejuvenation of Chamunda Mai Pond**' at an estimated cost of Rs. 81.76 lakh includes cleaning, de-silting, dewatering, basic constructed wetland system, water treatment, aeration system, plantation, fencing, barbed wire etc. will help in recharging groundwater and act as a source of water for local population. It will also improve the overall aesthetics and hygiene of the village. The total area of the pond to be rejuvenated is about 10,626 sq. m.
- The two projects of Riverfront Development in Badrinath, Uttarakhand amounting to Rs. 32.15 crore have also been approved **under Clean Ganga Fund**. One of these projects include construction of river embankment, promenade, public amenities like drinking water facility, public toilets, etc., seating space, pavilions and ghats along River Ganga. Two projects pertaining to crematoriums including 'Construction of Electric Crematorium' at Kalyani, West Bengal (4.20 crore) and 'Development of Cremation Ghat' at Paudi Garhwal (1.82 crore) were also approved.

- An important project on **'Evaluation of Natural Farming Practices on Water and Energy Savings'** has also been approved. The main objectives of the project, to be implemented by **Water and Land Management Training and Research Institute (WALAMTARI)**, are to study the impact of natural farming practices on water and energy savings, to assess the impact of natural farming practices on soil fertility, crop productivity and overall profitability and to disseminate the knowledge & information on natural farming practices to various stakeholders through field demonstration customized training and workshops.
- Namami Ganga Mission aims to make agriculture practices natural and organic along the Ganga river, improve the farmers' income, and also conserve river-linked ecology, soil, water, and biodiversity. In the 1st National Ganga Council (NGC) meeting held in December 2019, the Hon'ble Prime Minister had directed that Namami Ganga should lead and transform into a Model for Sustainable Economic Development- **"Arth Ganga"** to integrate people in the basin with Ganga rejuvenation. The proposed study will also help in preparing an economic model based on natural farming, more beneficial for farmers thereby helping the 'Arth Ganga' strengthen.
- A pilot project – **'Implementation of Membrane-based soil-less agriculture technology under Arth Ganga Framework'** – will also be executed in two-phases. The project is targeted to enable 1000 acres of farming using this framework and envisages technology demonstration farms at 15 locations across 15 different agro-climatic zones and identification of 60 additional sites to showcase the technology at a total 75 locations to celebrate Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

44. AIM Concludes ATL Tinkerpreneur 2021 with Atal Catalyst ISB program for the Top 100 student teams

- In December 2021, Atal Innovation Mission(AIM), NITI Aayog partnered with the prestigious Indian School of Business (ISB) to curate a special program – **"Atal Catalysts @ISB"** with the goal of nurturing the **Top 100 Business Venture Ideas that emerged from the ATL Tinkerpreneur Bootcamp.**
- The Tinkerpreneur bootcamp was a **first of its kind initiative by AIM to teach students entrepreneurship during the summer break.**
- Students learnt various skills such as **latest technology skills, building a product, business models, marketing, branding, business finance, building an online store and finally how to pitch their venture.**
- **ATL Tinkerpreneur witnessed participation from over 9000 students and leveraged the knowledge and hands-on involvement of over 650 Mentors of Change** to build a complete digital business venture at the end of the bootcamp. The Top 100 Students/teams were mapped to ISB to nurture their ideas further.
- **I-Venture @ ISB, which fosters all entrepreneurial activities for the Institution and nurtures start-ups,** took over the charge of developing, designing and executing the 2nd stage of the students' journey towards becoming entrepreneurs.
- Since then, the students/teams with the 100 most promising ideas have gone through a variety of Masterclasses and mentoring sessions that have added value to them and to their products.

- No less than six Masterclasses were conducted, each of them taught using case studies and real-world examples. The topics covered a wide range:
 - Entrepreneurial Ecosystem & Mindset
 - Competitor Analysis & Market Research
 - Idea Validation, Product or Idea Development
 - Digital Marketing & Branding
 - Finance & HR
 - Investor Pitch & Pitching Techniques
- While the Masterclasses added to the knowledge base of the students, the **highlight of their journey at Atal Catalysts @ ISB was the customized mentoring experience that was curated for each of them.**
- More than 65 mentors were part of the program, **each of them an alumnus of ISB. Each of them came from different backgrounds and fields and brought different capabilities with them.**
- The Atal Catalysts @ ISB team carefully analysed the areas of improvement for every idea and mapped it to the expertise of the right mentor.
- This ensured that the students got the most appropriate guidance they needed to enhance their product and develop the necessary entrepreneurial/business skills.
- The mentoring sessions were conducted one-on-one so that they provided personalized attention to each of the students/teams.
- With the sponsorships, the selected students/teams will work on developing the app or website before taking them to market.

45. All-India Consumer Price Index Numbers for Agricultural and Rural Labourers – April, 2022

- The All-India Consumer Price Index Number for **Agricultural and Rural Labourers (Base: 1986-87=100) for the month of April, 2022 increased by 10 points** each to stand at 1108 (One thousand one hundred and eight) and 1119 (One thousand one hundred and nineteen) points respectively.
- The major contribution towards the rise in general index of Agricultural Labourers and Rural Labourers came from food group to the **extent of 7.32 & 7.13 points respectively mainly due to increase in prices of rice, wheat-atta, jowar, bajra, ragi, vegetables & fruits, etc.**
- The rise/fall in index varied from State to State. In case of Agricultural Labourers, it recorded an increase of **1 to 20 points in 19 States while Tamilnadu State recorded a decrease of 7 points.** Tamilnadu with 1275 points topped the index table whereas Himachal Pradesh with 880 points stood at the bottom.
- In case of Rural Labourers, it **recorded an increase of 2 to 19 points in 19 States and Tamilnadu State recorded a decrease of 7 points.** Tamilnadu with 1263 points topped the index table whereas Himachal Pradesh with 931 points stood at the bottom.

- Amongst states, the **maximum increase in the Consumer Price Index Number for Agricultural Labourers was experienced by Kerala (20 points) and for Rural Labourers** by Kerala & West Bengal States (19 points each) mainly due to rise in the prices of rice, pulses, fish fresh/dry, vegetables & fruits, wheat-atta, bajra, firewood, shirting cloth cotton (mill), plastic chappal/shoes, etc.
- On the contrary, the decrease in Consumer Price Index Numbers for Agricultural Labourers & Rural Labourers was recorded by Tamilnadu State (7 points each) mainly due to fall in the prices of rice, fish fresh/dry, onion, vegetables & fruits, etc.

46. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh launches Single National Portal for Biotech researchers and Start-Ups

- In keeping with the spirit of "**One Nation,One Portal**", Union Minister of State (IC) Ministry of Science and Technology; Minister of State (IC) Ministry of Earth Science; MoS of Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Dr Jitendra Singh launched **Single National Portal for Biotech researchers and Start-ups**.
- The **Portal "BioRRAP" will cater to all those seeking regulatory approval** for biological research & development activity in the country and thus **offer a huge relief for "Ease of Science as well as Ease of Business**.
- The Portal will also **allow stakeholders to see the approvals accorded against a particular application through a unique BioRRAP ID**.
- This unique portal of **DBT as a step towards Ease of Doing Science and Scientific research and Ease of Start-ups in India**.
- The Minister said, Bio-technology has fast emerged as an academic and livelihood avenue for youngsters in India. He also pointed out that **there are over 2,700 biotech start-ups and more than 2,500 biotech companies working at present in the country**.

47. Union Minister of Labour and Employment Shri Bhupender Yadav lays foundation stone of 100 bedded ESIC hospital in Sriperumbudur, Tamilnadu

- Minister of Labour and Employment, Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav, laid the foundation stone of 100 bedded ESIC hospital in Sriperumbudur.
- Bhupender Yadav said that the hospital will be built at an estimated cost of 155 Crore and will have the facilities of General Medicine, General Surgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, including Paediatrics, Emergency, Critical Care / Intensive Care (ICU), Anesthesia, Ophthalmology, Dermatology & Venereology (Skin & VD), (ENT), Pulmonology and Dentistry.
- The minister said that in Tamilnadu, ESIC is catering to the medical needs of 38.26 lakhs Insured Persons and around 1.48 Crore beneficiaries.

48. Investment Incentive Agreement between the Government of India and the Government of United States of America

- The Government of India and the Government of the United States of America has signed an **Investment Incentive Agreement (IIA) today at Tokyo, Japan.**
- The IIA was signed by Shri Vinay Kwatra, Foreign Secretary, Government of India, and Mr. Scott Nathan, Chief Executive Officer, U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC).
- This **IIA supersedes the Investment Incentive Agreement signed between the Government of India and the Government of the United States of America in the year 1997.**
- Significant developments have taken place since the signing of the earlier IIA in **1997 including the creation of a new agency called DFC, a development finance agency of Government of USA**, as a successor agency of the erstwhile Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) after the enactment of a recent legislation of USA, **the BUILD Act 2018.**
- IIA has been signed, to keep pace with the additional investment support programmes, offered by the DFC, such as debt, equity investment, investment guaranty, investment insurance or reinsurance, feasibility studies for potential projects and grants.
- The Agreement is the legal requirement for DFC, to continue providing investment support in India. DFC or their **predecessor agencies are active in India since 1974 and have so far provided investment support worth \$5.8 billion of which \$2.9 billion is still outstanding.**
- Proposals worth \$4 billion are under consideration by DFC for providing investment support in India. DFC has provided investment support in sectors that matter for development such as COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, healthcare financing, renewable energy, SME financing, financial inclusion, infrastructure etc. It is expected that signing of IIA would lead to enhanced Investment support provided by DFC in India, which shall further help in India's development.

49. 8th International Day of Yoga to be held at Mysuru: PM will lead the Mass Demonstration

- The main event of **8th International Day of Yoga (IDY-2022) demonstration will be held at Mysuru in Karnataka on 21st June 2022.** Minister of Ayush Shri Sarbanand Sonowal announced that Mysuru has been selected as the venue for Mass Yoga Demonstration (Main Event) of 8th IDY.
- As this IDY is falling in the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" year, **the Ministry has also planned to observe IDY at 75 iconic locations across the country and is focusing on branding India on a global scale.**
- A series of events are planned in the run up to IDY and the 25 Day Countdown is being observed at Hyderabad on May 27, wherein around 10 thousand Yoga enthusiasts will participate in the Yoga demonstration.

- The event will witness the auspicious presence of the Governor of Karnataka, Union Ministers, Film Stars, Sports Persons, Celebrities, revered Yoga Gurus, eminent dignitaries, experts of Yoga and allied science, local Yoga institutions and Yoga enthusiasts.
- The earlier mega countdown events were organised at Shivdoli (50th Day Countdown on May 2) and Red Fort (75th Day Countdown on April 7).

50. Citizens can now access Digilocker services on the MyGov Helpdesk on WhatsApp

- In a major initiative to make **Government services accessible, inclusive, transparent and simple**, MyGov today **announced that citizens will now be able to use the MyGov Helpdesk on WhatsApp** to access the Digilocker service.
- This includes creating and authenticating their Digilocker account, downloading documents such as **PAN card, driving license, vehicle registration certificate, among others, all on WhatsApp.**
- Government has been working for “Ease of Living” through Digital India. In this context, the MyGov Helpdesk on WhatsApp is a **major step to ensure governance and government services at the fingertips of citizens.**
- **MyGov Helpdesk, will now offer a suite of services for integrated citizen support and efficient governance**, starting with Digilocker services. The new service will enable citizens to access the following documents with ease and convenience, from the safety of their homes.
 - PAN card
 - Driving License
 - CBSE Class X Passing Certificate
 - Vehicle Registration Certificate (RC)
 - Insurance Policy - Two Wheeler
 - Class X Marksheet
 - Class XII Marksheet
 - Insurance Policy Document (Life and Non life available on digilocker)
- WhatsApp users across the country can use the chatbot by simply sending ‘Namaste or Hi or Digilocker’ to the WhatsApp number +91 9013151515.
- Since its launch in March 2020, the MyGov Helpdesk (earlier known as MyGov Corona Helpdesk) on WhatsApp has served as a **critical instrument in fighting Covid-19 pandemic by offering people authentic sources of Covid-related information**, along with critical uses like vaccine appointment bookings and vaccine certificate downloads.
- With new additions like **Digilocker, the MyGov chatbot on WhatsApp aims to build a comprehensive administrative support system for citizens to access resources** and essential services that are digitally inclusive.
- Offering Digilocker services on the MyGov Helpdesk is a natural progression and a step towards providing citizens with simplified access to essential services via WhatsApp’s easy and accessible platform.

- With almost 100 Million+ people already registered on Digilocker and 5 Billion+ documents issued till date, the service on WhatsApp will digitally empower millions by helping them access authentic documents and information, right from within their phones.

51. Centre announces formation of Cotton Council of India under Chairmanship of Suresh Bhai Kotak

- The Union Government has announced the **formation of the Cotton Council of India under the Chairmanship of renowned veteran cotton man Suresh Bhai Kotak.**
- It will have representation from Textiles, Agriculture, Commerce, and Finance Ministries along with Cotton Corporation of India and Cotton Research Institute.
- The first meeting of the proposed council has been scheduled for 28th of this month. The council will discuss, deliberate, and **prepare a robust action plan for bringing out a tangible improvement in this field.**
- Pointing out that government is committed to protect the interests of cotton farmers, spinners, and weavers, the Minister assured to actively consider the demand of the spinning sector for exemption from import duty on those import contracts in which bills of lading is issued up to 30th of September of this year to overcome current cotton shortage and logistic issues.

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