

CURRENT AFFAIRS

For ESE & PSUs

Amrit Kal

BUDGET

2023



- Highlight of Budget 2023-24
- Smart Cities Mission
- All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)
- Indus Water Treaty 1960
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- China's Belt and Road Initiative

For Competitive Exams like
ESE, PSUs & State Engineering Exams

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1.

SOCIAL ISSUES



URBANIZATION

Smart Cities Mission

The 100 Smart Cities Mission in India was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 25, 2015.

Smart Cities Mission is an urban renewal and retrofitting program launched by the Government of India to develop smart cities and make them citizen friendly and sustainable.

The Union Ministry of Urban Development is responsible for implementing the mission in collaboration with state governments; this is expected to complete between 2019 & 2023. The core infrastructure elements in a Smart City are as follows:

- Adequate water supply
- Assured electricity supply.
- Sanitation including solid waste management.
- Efficient urban mobility and public transport
- Affordable housing, especially for the poor
- Robust IT connectivity and digitalization
- Good governance, especially e-governance and citizen participation
- Sustainable environment
- Safety and security of citizens, particularly women, children and the elderly
- Health and education



EDUCATION

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)

- To portray the status of higher education in the country, Ministry of Education has endeavored to conduct an annual web-based All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) since 2010-11. The survey covers all the Institutions in the country engaged in imparting of higher education. Data is being collected on several parameters such as teachers, student enrolment, programs, examination results, education finance, infrastructure.
- Indicators of educational development such as Institution Density, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Pupil-teacher ratio, Gender Parity Index, Per Student Expenditure will also be calculated from the data collected through AISHE. These are useful in making informed policy decisions and research for development of education sector.
- The Union Ministry of Education released data from the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), 2020-2021, which showed a 7.5% increase in student enrolments across the country compared to 2019-20.
- The survey also revealed that in 2020-21, the year when the Covid-19 pandemic began, there was a 7% rise in enrolments in distance education programs.
- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for all enrolments (as per 2011 Census) increased by over 2 points to 27.3.
- The highest enrolment was seen at the undergraduate level, which accounted for 78.9% of all enrolments.
- The female enrolment in higher education programs had increased to 49% of total enrolments in 2020-21 compared to 45% in 2019-20.
- Uttar Pradesh; Maharashtra; Tamil Nadu; Madhya Pradesh; Karnataka and Rajasthan are the top 6 States in terms of number of students enrolled.
- Uttar Pradesh; Maharashtra; Karnataka; Rajasthan; Tamil Nadu; Madhya Pradesh; Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat are the top 8 States in terms of number of colleges.
- Teacher-pupil ratio was at 27 for all universities, colleges, and standalone institutions and at 24 if only regular mode is considered due to which the quality of education remains a concern.





SANITATION

National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)

Namaste is a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) as a joint initiative of the MoSJE and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

NAMASTE envisages safety and dignity of sanitation workers in urban India by creating an enabling ecosystem that recognizes sanitation workers as one of the key contributors in operations and maintenance of sanitation infrastructure thereby providing sustainable livelihood and enhancing their occupational safety through capacity building and improved access to safety gear and machines.

Ensure safety and dignity of sanitation workers in urban India and providing sustainable livelihood and enhancing their occupational safety through capacity building and improved access to safety gear and machines.

- i. NAMASTE would also aim at providing access to alternative livelihoods support and entitlements to reduce the vulnerabilities of sanitation workers and enable them to access self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities and break the intergenerationally in sanitation work.
- ii. In addition, NAMASTE would bring about a behavior change amongst citizens towards sanitation workers and enhance demand for safe sanitation services.

NAMASTE aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- i. Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India
- ii. All sanitation work is performed by skilled workers
- iii. No sanitation workers come in direct contact with human fecal matter
- iv. Sanitation workers are collectivized into SHGs and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises
- v. All Sewer and Septic tank sanitation workers (SSWs) have access to alternative livelihoods
- vi. Strengthened supervisory and monitoring systems at national, state and ULB levels to ensure enforcement and monitoring of safe sanitation work
- vii. Increased awareness amongst sanitation services seekers (individuals and institutions) to seek services from registered and skilled sanitation workers

Five hundred cities (converging with AMRUT cities) will be taken up under this phase of NAMASTE. The list of cities will be notified at an appropriate time. The category of cities that will be eligible are given below:

- i. All Cities and Towns with a population of over one lakh with notified Municipalities, including Cantonment Boards (Civilian areas),
- ii. All Capital Cities/Towns of States/ Union Territories (UTs), not covered in 4(i),
- iii. Ten Cities from hill states, islands and tourist destinations (not more than one from each State).




2.

ECONOMIC ISSUES



EMPLOYMENT

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by National Skill Development Corporation. 
- The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.
- Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- Under Skill India Mission, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is delivering skills through Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) with an objective to impart short duration skill development training and certification to youth and to make them employable for better livelihood across the country.
- The PMKVY (except PMKVY 1.0 (2015-16)) has two components, namely, Central component being implemented through National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and State component being implemented through State Skill Development Mission of the State/UT. Under Central component of PMKVY, there is no provision of State-wise funds allocation.
- Under State component of PMKVY, funds and corresponding physical targets have been allocated to the States for the implementation of scheme through State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs).
- Under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), short term training is being implemented in accredited and affiliated training centres across the country
- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) promotes establishment of model training centres in every district of the country known as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK).
- In order to re-skill and up-skill IT-professionals to be adept with the emerging technologies, National Skill

Development Corporation (NSDC) under the aegis of MSDE has established 'Future of Work' initiative, and has designed and developed Qualification Packs (QPs) in association with IT-ITeS Sector Skill Council across 9 emerging technologies such as, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data Analytics, Block Chain, Cloud Computing, Cyber Security, Internet of Things, Robotic Process Automation, Social & Mobile Application and Virtual Reality.



BUDGET

Highlights of Budget 2023-24

Vision for Amrit Kaal- an empowered and inclusive economy

The economic agenda for achieving this vision would focus on three priorities:

- facilitating ample opportunities for citizens, especially the youth, to fulfil their aspirations.
- providing strong impetus to growth and job creation; and
- strengthening macro-economic stability



UNION BUDGET 2023-24

Vision For Amrit Kaal

Empowered & Inclusive Economy

- ✓ Opportunities for Citizens with focus on Youth
- ✓ Growth in Job Creation
- ✓ Strong and Stable Macro-Economic Environment

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To service these focus areas in country's journey to India@100, the budget identifies four transformative opportunities:-

JOURNEY TO INDIA @100

4 TRANSFORMATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- Economic Empowerment of Women**
 - 81 lakh Self Help Groups under DAY-NRLM to be transformed into large producer enterprises
- PM Vishwakarma KAushal Samman (PM VIKAS)**
 - Financial support, skill training and knowledge to traditional artisans
- Tapping the potential of Tourism**
- Green Growth leading to efficient use of energy across sectors and green jobs**

Logos: PIB, 75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, G20 India 2023

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Economic Empowerment of Women through SHGs:

Noting that the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihood Mission has achieved remarkable success by mobilizing rural women into 81 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs), Union Finance Minister stated that "We will enable these groups to reach the next stage of economic empowerment through formation of large producer enterprises or collectives with each having several thousand members and managed professionally. They will be helped with supply of raw materials and for better design, quality, branding and marketing of their products." Through supporting policies, they will be enabled to scale up their operations to serve the large consumer markets, as has been the case with several start-ups growing into 'Unicorns'.

PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman (PM VIKAS):

Union Finance Minister announced a new scheme for the traditional artisans and craftspeople, generally referred to as Vishwakarma. Noting that the art and handicraft created by them represent the true spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat, for the first time, a package of assistance for them has been conceptualized.

The new scheme will:-

- enable them to improve the quality, scale and reach of their products, integrating them with the MSME value chain
- include not only financial support but also access to advanced skill training, knowledge of modern digital techniques and efficient green technologies, brand promotion, linkage with local and global markets, digital payments, and social security
- greatly benefit the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, women and people belonging to the weaker sections.

Tourism Promotion in Mission Mode:

Underlining the immense tourism potential the country offers for domestic as well as foreign tourists, Union Finance Minister stated that "The sector holds huge opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship for youth in particular and there is a large potential to be tapped in tourism." She announced that promotion of tourism will be taken up on mission mode, with active participation of states, convergence of government programmes and public-private partnerships.

Green Growth:

Union Finance Minister emphasized the focus of the Government on green growth efforts that help in reducing carbon intensity of the economy and provides for largescale green job opportunities. She noted that "We are implementing many programmes for green fuel, green energy, green farming, green mobility, green buildings, and green equipment, and policies for efficient use of energy across various economic sectors."

GREEN GROWTH

MOVING FORWARD TO ACHIEVE THE CLIMATE GOALS

- Green Credit Programme** to be launched to incentivize sustainable actions
- PM-PRANAM*** to be launched to incentivize States/UTs to promote alternative fertilizers
- 500 new 'Waste to Wealth' plants** to be established under **GOBARdhan Scheme**
- MISHTI^** to be taken up for Mangrove plantation along coastline
- Amrit Dharohar** to be implemented over next 3 years for optimal usage of wetlands

Logos: PIB, 75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, G20 India 2023

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* PRANAM: PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth ^ MISHTI: Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes

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Saptarishi: Seven guiding priorities of Budget 2023-24

Union Finance Minister announced the first budget in Amrit Kaal will be guided by seven priorities that complement each other and act as the 'Saptarishi'.

1. Inclusive Development
2. Reaching the Last Mile
3. Infrastructure and Investment
4. Unleashing the Potential
5. Green Growth
6. Youth Power
7. Financial Sector



Priority 1: Inclusive Development

The Government's philosophy of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas has facilitated inclusive development covering in specific, farmers, women, youth, OBCs, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, divyangjan and economically weaker sections, and overall priority for the underprivileged (vanchiton ko varyyata). There has also been a sustained focus on Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh and the North-East.



Agriculture and Cooperation

Digital Public Infrastructure for Agriculture

Digital Public infrastructure for agriculture will be built as an open source, open standard and inter operable public good. This will enable inclusive, farmer-centric solutions through relevant information services for crop planning and health, improved access to farm inputs, credit, and insurance, help for crop estimation, market intelligence, and support for growth of agri-tech industry and start-ups.

Agriculture Accelerator Fund

An Agriculture Accelerator Fund will be set-up to encourage agri-startups by young entrepreneurs in rural areas, which will aim at bringing innovative and affordable solutions for challenges faced by farmers. It will also bring in modern technologies to transform agricultural practices, increase productivity and profitability.

Enhancing productivity of cotton crop

To enhance the productivity of extra-long staple cotton, Government will adopt a cluster-based and value chain approach through Public Private Partnerships (PPP). This will mean collaboration between farmers, state and industry for input supplies, extension services, and market linkages.

Atmanirbhar Horticulture Clean Plant Programme

The Government will launch an Atmanirbhar Clean Plant Programme to boost availability of disease-free, quality planting material for high value horticultural crops at an outlay of Rs 2,200 crore.

Global Hub for Millets: 'Shree Anna'

India is at the forefront of popularizing Millets, whose consumption furthers nutrition, food security and welfare of farmers. India is the largest producer and second largest exporter of 'Shree Anna' in the world as it grows several types of 'Shree Anna' such as jowar, ragi, bajra, kuttu, ramdana, kangni, kutki, kodo, cheena, and sama.

Indian Institute of Millet Research, Hyderabad will be supported as the Centre of Excellence for sharing best practices, research and technologies at the international level.

Agriculture Credit

The agriculture credit target will be increased to Rs 20 lakh crore with focus on animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries.

The Government will launch a new sub-scheme of PM Matsya Sampada Yojana with targeted investment of Rs 6,000 crore to further enable activities of fishermen, fish vendors, and micro & small enterprises, improve value chain efficiencies, and expand the market.

Cooperation

For farmers, especially small and marginal farmers, and other marginalized sections, the government is promoting cooperative-based economic development model. A new Ministry of Cooperation was formed with a mandate to realize the vision of 'Sahakar Se Samridhi'. To realise this vision, the government has already initiated computerization of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) with an investment of Rs 2,516 crore.

In consultation with all stakeholders and states, model bye-laws for PACS were formulated enabling them to become multipurpose PACS. A national cooperative database is being prepared for country-wide mapping of cooperative societies. Government will implement a plan to set up massive decentralized storage capacity, which will help farmers store their produce and realize remunerative prices through sale at appropriate times. The government will also facilitate setting up of a large number of multipurpose cooperative societies, primary fishery societies and dairy cooperative societies in uncovered panchayats and villages in the next 5 years.

Health, Education and Skilling

Medical & Nursing Colleges

One hundred and fifty-seven new nursing colleges will be established in co-location with the existing 157 medical colleges established since 2014. A Mission to eliminate Sickle Cell Anaemia by 2047 will be launched, which will entail awareness creation, universal screening of 7 crore people in the age group of 0-40 years in affected tribal areas, and counseling through collaborative efforts of central ministries and state governments.

On Medical Research, facilities in select ICMR Labs will be made available for research by public and private medical college faculty and private sector R&D teams for encouraging collaborative research and innovation.

AFFORDABLE HEALTH FOR ALL

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Enhanced Health Expenditure: **2.1%** of GDP in FY23
- Sickle Cell Anaemia elimination Mission** to be launched
- 157** New Nursing Colleges to be established
- Joint Public and Private Medical Research to be encouraged via select ICMR labs
- New Programme to promote research in Pharmaceuticals to be launched

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Teachers' Training

Teachers' training will be re-envisioned through innovative pedagogy, curriculum transaction, continuous professional development, dipstick surveys, and ICT implementation. She added that the District Institutes of Education and Training will be developed as vibrant institutes of excellence for this purpose.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION AND SKILLING

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Enhanced Education Expenditure: **2.9%** of GDP in FY23
- Revamped Teachers' training via District Institutes of Education and Training
- National Digital Library** to be set up for children and adolescents
- States will be encouraged to set up physical libraries at Panchayat and ward levels
- PMKVY 4.0** to be launched to skill lakhs of youth

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National Digital Library for Children and Adolescents will be set-up for facilitating availability of quality books across geographies, languages, genres and levels, and device agnostic accessibility. States will be encouraged to set up physical libraries for them at panchayat and ward levels and provide infrastructure for accessing the National Digital Library resources.

Additionally, to build a culture of reading, and to make up for pandemic-time learning loss, the National Book Trust, Children's Book Trust and other sources will be encouraged to provide and replenish non-curricular titles in regional languages and English to these physical libraries.

Priority 2: Reaching the Last Mile

Government has formed the ministries of AYUSH, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Skill Development, Jal Shakti and Cooperation.

Reaching The Last Mile
No One To Be Left Behind

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

- Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission to be launched
- Financial assistance for sustainable micro irrigation in drought prone regions of Karnataka
- 38800 more teachers for 740 Eklavya Model Residential Schools
- Free food grain to all Antyodaya and priority households for one year, under PMGKAY
- Bharat SHRI to be set up for digitization of ancient inscriptions
- Outlay of PM Awas Yojna enhanced by 66 %

* Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

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Aspirational Districts and Blocks Programme

Building on the success of the Aspirational Districts Programme, the Government has recently launched the Aspirational Blocks Programme covering 500 blocks for saturation of essential government services across multiple domains such as health, nutrition, education, agriculture, water resources, financial inclusion, skill development, and basic infrastructure.

Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission

To improve socio-economic conditions of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs), Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission will be launched. This will saturate PVTG families and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Water for Drought Prone Region

In the drought prone central region of Karnataka, central assistance of Rs 5,300 crore will be given to Upper Bhadra Project to provide sustainable micro irrigation and filling up of surface tanks for drinking water.

Priority 3: Infrastructure & Investment

Investments in Infrastructure and productive capacity have a large multiplier impact on growth and employment and in view of this capital investment outlay is being increased steeply for the third year in a row by 33 per cent to Rs 10 lakh crore, which would be 3.3 per cent of GDP. She said that this will be almost three times the outlay in 2019-20. The 'Effective Capital Expenditure' of the Centre is budgeted at Rs 13.7 lakh crore, which will be 4.5 per cent of GDP.

INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT MULTIPLIER

- Increase in capital investment outlay by 33.4% to ₹10 lakh crore
- Infrastructure Finance Secretariat to assist stakeholders for more private investment in infrastructure
- Urban Infrastructure in Tier 2 and 3 cities via establishment of UIDF*
- Continuation of 50-year interest free loan to State Governments

*UIDF: Urban Infrastructure Development Fund

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Railways

The finance minister announced that an Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF) will be established through use of priority sector lending shortfall, which will be managed by the National Housing Bank, and will be used by public agencies to create urban infrastructure in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

Priority 4: Unleashing the Potential

For enhancing ease of doing business, more than 39,000 compliances have been reduced and more than 3,400 legal provisions have been decriminalized.

For furthering the trust based governance, Government has introduced the Jan Vishwas Bill to amend 42 Central Acts.

UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

TOWARDS A TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE ADMINISTRATION

- Phase 3 of E-Courts to be launched for efficient administration of justice
- Vivad se Vishwas I for less stringent contract execution for MSMEs
- Vivad se Vishwas II for easier settlement of contractual disputes of Govt and Govt undertakings
- 'Input Based' to 'Result Based' Financing for better allocation of scarce resources
- Entity Digi Locker to be setup for businesses for secure online storing and sharing of documents

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Centres of Excellence for Artificial Intelligence

For realizing the vision of “Make A-I in India and Make A-I work for India”, three centers of excellence for Artificial Intelligence will be set-up in top educational institutions.

Leading industry players will partner in conducting interdisciplinary research, develop cutting-edge applications and scalable problem solutions in the areas of agriculture, health, and sustainable cities, which will galvanize an effective A-I ecosystem and nurture quality human resources in the field.

National Data Governance Policy

To unleash innovation and research by start-ups and academia, a National Data Governance Policy will be brought out, which will enable access to anonymized data.

An Entity DigiLocker will be set up for use by MSMEs, large business and charitable trusts for storing and sharing documents online securely, whenever needed, with various authorities, regulators, banks and other business entities.

One hundred labs for developing applications using 5G services will be set up in engineering institutions to realize a new range of opportunities, business models, and employment potential. The labs will cover, among others, applications such as smart classrooms, precision farming, intelligent transport systems, and health care applications.

Priority 5: Green Growth

Prime Minister has given a vision for “LiFE”, or Lifestyle for Environment, to spur a movement of environmentally conscious lifestyle.

India is moving forward firmly for the ‘panchamrit’ and net-zero carbon emission by 2070 to usher in green industrial and economic transition.

GREEN GROWTH

MOVING FORWARD TO ACHIEVE THE CLIMATE GOALS

- Green Credit Programme to be launched to incentivize sustainable actions
- PM-PRANAM* to be launched to incentivize States/UTs to promote alternative fertilizers
- 500 new 'Waste to Wealth' plants to be established under GOBARdhan Scheme
- MISHTI* to be taken up for Mangrove plantation along coastline
- Amrit Dharohar to be implemented over next 3 years for optimal usage of wetlands

* PRANAM: PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth * MISHTI: Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes

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Budget builds on the focus on green growth. The recently launched National Green Hydrogen Mission, with an outlay of Rs 19,700 crores, will facilitate transition of the economy to low carbon intensity, reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports, and make the country assume technology and market leadership in this sunrise sector. The target is to reach an annual production of 5 MMT by 2030.

The Budget also provides Rs35,000 crore for priority capital investments towards energy transition and net zero objectives, and energy security by Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

To steer the economy on the sustainable development path, Battery Energy Storage Systems with capacity of 4,000 MWH will be supported with Viability Gap Funding.

The Inter-state transmission system for evacuation and grid integration of 13 GW renewable energy from Ladakh will be constructed with investment of Rs 20,700 crore including central support of Rs 8,300 crore.

GOBARdhan scheme

500 new ‘waste to wealth’ plants under GOBARdhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan) scheme will be established for promoting circular economy.

These will include 200 compressed biogas (CBG) plants, including 75 plants in urban areas, and 300 community or cluster-based plants at total investment of Rs 10,000 crore.

A 5 per cent CBG mandate will be introduced for all organizations marketing natural and bio gas and for collection of bio-mass and distribution of bio-manure, appropriate fiscal support will be provided.

Bhartiya Prakritik Kheti Bio-Input Resource Centres

Over the next 3 years, the Centre will facilitate one crore farmers to adopt natural farming. For this, 10,000 Bio-Input Resource Centres will be set-up, creating a national-level distributed micro-fertilizer and pesticide manufacturing network.

Priority 6: Youth Power

To empower the youth and help the ‘Amrit Peedhi’ realize their dreams, Government has formulated the National Education Policy, focused on skilling, adopted economic policies that facilitate job creation at scale, and have supported business opportunities.

Youth Power

Empowering 'Amrit Peedhi'

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0**
 - › On-job training, industry partnership, new age courses like AI, robotics, mechatronics, 3D printing, drones, etc
- **Skill India Digital Platform**
 - › Expanding digital ecosystem to enable demand-based formal skilling, linking with employers and facilitating access to entrepreneurship schemes

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Youth Power

Empowering 'Amrit Peedhi'

- **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme**
 - › To provide stipend support to 47 lakh youth in three years
- **Boosting Tourism**
 - › 50 destinations to be selected and developed as complete package for domestic & foreign tourists
- **Setting Up Of Unity Malls In State Capitals**
 - › For promotion and sale of ODOPs (One District, One Product), GI and handicraft products

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Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 will be launched to skill lakhs of youth within the next three years. On-job training, industry partnership, and alignment of courses with needs of industry will be emphasized. The scheme will also cover new age courses for Industry 4.0 like coding, AI, robotics, mechatronics, IOT, 3D printing, drones, and soft skills.

National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme

To provide stipend support to 47 lakh youth in three years, Direct Benefit Transfer under a pan-India National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme will be rolled out.

Unity Mall

States will be encouraged to set up a Unity Mall in their state capital or most prominent tourism centre or the financial capital for promotion and sale of their own ODOPs (one district, one product), GI products and other handicraft products, and for providing space for such products of all other States.

Priority 7: Financial Sector

Credit Guarantee for MSMEs

Financial Sector

Proposed Measures:

- ✓ **Setting up of National Financial Information Registry:**
 - To facilitate efficient credit flow, promote financial inclusion, and foster financial stability.
- ✓ **Setting up of a Central Data processing Centre:**
 - For faster handling of administrative work under the Companies Act
- ✓ **Credit Guarantee for MSMEs:**
 - Rs. 9,000 Cr infusion in corpus from 1st April 2023

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A National Financial Information Registry will be set up to serve as the central repository of financial and ancillary information. This will facilitate efficient flow of credit, promote financial inclusion, and foster financial stability. A new legislative framework will govern this credit public infrastructure, and it will be designed in consultation with the RBI.

A Central Processing Centre will be setup for faster response to companies through centralized handling of various forms filed with field offices under the Companies Act.

Financial Sector

Proposed Measures:

- ✓ **Mahila Samman Bachat Patras:**
 - One-time new small savings scheme for 2-year period with deposit facility of up to Rs 2 lakh for women
- ✓ **Benefits for Senior Citizens:**
 - Enhanced maximum deposit limit for senior citizens savings scheme from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh
- ✓ **GIFT IFSC:**
 - Several initiatives to promote business activities in GIFT IFSC

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Financial Sector

Fiscal Management

- ✓ Fifty-year interest free loan to States
- ✓ Fiscal Deficit of 3.5% of GDP allowed for States
- ✓ Fiscal Deficit for 2022-23 is 6.4% (RE), for 2023-24 is 5.9% (BE) and is on target to be below 4.5% by 2025-26
- ✓ Budget Estimates 2023-24:
 - Total Receipts (Other than borrowings): **Rs 27.2 Lakh Cr**
 - Total Expenditure: **Rs. 45 Lakh Cr**
 - Net Tax Receipts: **Rs 23.3 Lakh Cr**

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For commemorating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, a one-time new small savings scheme, Mahila Samman Savings Certificate, will be made available for a two-year period up to March 2025. This will offer deposit facility upto Rs 2 lakh in the name of women or girls for a tenor of 2 years at fixed interest rate of 7.5 per cent with partial withdrawal option.

Senior Citizens

The maximum deposit limit for Senior Citizen Savings Scheme will be enhanced from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh.

Also, the maximum deposit limit for Monthly Income Account Scheme will be enhanced from Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 9 lakh for single account and from Rs 9 lakh to Rs 15 lakh for joint account.

Fiscal Management

Fifty-year interest free loan to States

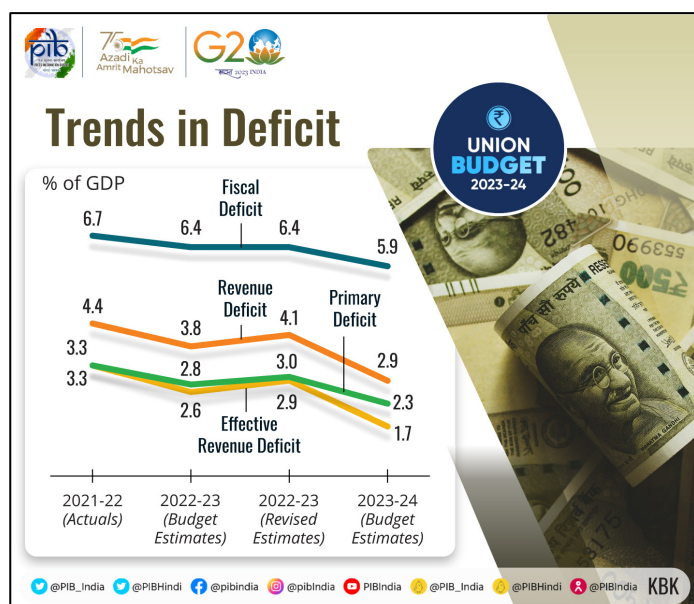
The entire fifty-year loan to states has to be spent on capital expenditure within 2023-24. Most of this will be at the discretion of states, but a part will be conditional on states increasing their actual capital expenditure.

Parts of the outlay will also be linked to, or allocated for, the following purposes: like Scrapping old government vehicles, Urban planning reforms and actions, Financing reforms in urban local bodies to make them, creditworthy for municipal bonds, Housing for police personnel above or as part of police stations, Constructing Unity Malls, Children and adolescents' libraries and digital infrastructure and State share of capital expenditure of central schemes.

Budget Estimates 2023-24

The total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs 27.2 lakh crore and Rs 45 lakh crore respectively. The net tax receipts are estimated at Rs 23.3 lakh crore.

The fiscal deficit is estimated to be 5.9 per cent of GDP.



The Government has adhered to this path, and reiterated to bring the fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent of GDP by 2025-26.

Personal Income Tax

There are five major announcements relating to the personal income tax.

The rebate limit in the new tax regime has been increased to ₹7 lakh, meaning that persons in the new tax regime with income upto ₹7 lakh will not have to pay any tax.

The tax structure in the new personal tax regime has been changed by reducing number of slabs to five and increasing the tax exemption limit to ₹ 3 lakh. This will provide major relief to all tax payers in the new regime.

SUBSTANTIAL RELIEF IN PERSONAL INCOME TAX

BENEFITING OUR HARD- WORKING MIDDLE CLASS

- No Income tax for persons with income up to **7 lakh** in the new tax regime
- Standard deduction of 50,000 to salaried people and deduction up to 15,000 for pensioners under new tax regime also
- Reduction of the highest surcharge rate from **37% to 25%** under new tax regime
- Tax exemption limit on leave encashment on retirement of non-govt salaried employees increased to 25 lakh

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

The benefit of standard deduction has been extended to the salaried class and the pensioners including family pensioner under the new tax regime.

Salaried individual will get standard deduction of ₹ 50,000 and pensioner ₹ 15,000 as per the proposal. Each salaried person with an income of ₹ 15.5 lakh or more will thus gain ₹ 52,500, from the above proposals.

The highest surcharge rate in personal income tax has been reduced from 37% to 25% in the new tax regime for income above ₹2 crore. This would result in maximum tax rate of personal income tax come down to 39% which was earlier 42.74%.

The limit of tax exemption on leave encashment on retirement of non-government salaried employees has been increased from ₹3 lakh to ₹25 lakh.

The new income tax regime has been made the default tax regime. However, the citizens will continue to have the option to avail the benefit of the old tax regime.

SUBSTANTIAL RELIEF IN PERSONAL INCOME TAX

CHANGE OF TAX STRUCTURE IN NEW PERSONAL INCOME TAX REGIME:

- Tax slabs reduced to 5
- Tax exemption limit increased to ₹3 lakh

Tax Slab (in lakh)	Tax Rate (in %)
0-3	Nil
3-6	5
6-9	10
9-12	15
12-15	20
Above 15	30

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

Indirect Tax Proposals

Simplification of tax structure with fewer tax rates so as to help in reducing compliance burden and improving tax administration. The number of basic customs duty rates on goods, other than textiles and agriculture, has been reduced from 21 to 13. There are minor changes in the basic customs duties, cesses and surcharges on items including toys, bicycles, automobiles and naphtha.

Indirect Tax Proposals

- Green Mobility:**
 - To exempt excise duty on GST-paid compressed bio gas
- Electronics:**
 - To provide relief in customs duty on import of certain parts of mobile phones
 - To reduce basic customs duty on parts of open cells of TV panels to 2.5%
- Electricals:**
 - To increase basic customs duty on electric kitchen chimney from 7.5% to 15%
 - To reduce basic customs duty on chimney heat coils from 20% to 15%
- Chemicals and Petrochemicals:**
 - To exempt basic customs duty on chemicals and petrochemicals
 - To reduce basic customs duty on acid grade fluorspar and crude glycerine to 2.5%

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

Indirect Tax Proposals

- Marine products:**
 - To reduce duty on key inputs for domestic manufacture of shrimp feed
- Lab Grown Diamonds:**
 - To reduce basic customs duty on seeds used in their manufacturing
- Precious Metals:**
 - To increase customs duties on articles made from gold and platinum
 - To increase import duty on silver dore, bars and articles
- Compounded Rubber:**
 - To increase basic customs duty rate on compounded rubber from 10% to 25%
- Cigarettes:**
 - National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD) on specified cigarettes to be revised upwards by about 16%

2/2

UNION BUDGET 2023-24

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To avoid cascading of taxes on blended compressed natural gas, excise duty on GST-paid compressed bio-gas contained in it has been exempted from excise duty. Customs duty exemption has been extended to import of capital goods and machinery required for manufacture of lithium-ion cells for batteries used in electric vehicles.

To further deepen domestic value addition in manufacture of mobile phones, the Finance Minister announced relief in customs duty on import of certain parts and inputs like camera lens. The concessional duty on lithium-ion cells for batteries will continue for another year. Basic customs duty on parts of open cells of TV panels has been reduced to 2.5%. The Budget also proposes changes in the basic customs duty to rectify inversion of duty structure and encourage manufacturing of electrical kitchen chimneys.

Denatured ethyl alcohol has been exempted from basic customs duty. Basic customs duty has also been reduced on acid grade fluorspar and crude glycerin. Duty is being reduced on key inputs for domestic manufacture of shrimp feed.

Basic customs duty on seeds used in the manufacture of Lab Grown Diamonds has also been reduced. The import duty on silver dore, bars and articles has been increased to align them with that on gold and platinum.

The basic customs duty rate on compounded rubber has been increased. National Calamity Contingent Duty on specified cigarettes has been revised upwards by about 16%. The basic customs duty on crude glycerin for use in manufacture of epichlorohydrin is proposed to be reduced from 7.5% to 2.5%.

Common IT Return Form

The Union Budget also proposes to roll out a next-generation common IT return form for tax payer convenience. It also stipulates a plan to strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism for direct taxes. The Finance Minister also announced deployment of about 100 Joint Commissioners for disposals of small appeals in direct tax matters.

Better targeting of tax concessions

For better targeting of tax concessions and exemptions, deduction from capital gains on investment in residential house has been capped at ₹ 10 crore. Income tax exemption from proceeds of insurance policies with very high value will also have limit. There are a number of proposals relating to rationalization and simplification of direct taxes in the Union Budget.

Other major proposals in the Budget relate to Extension of period of tax benefits to funds relocating to IFSC, GIFT City till 31.03.2025; Decriminalisation under section 276A of the Income Tax Act; Allowing carry forward of losses on strategic disinvestment including that of IDBI Bank; and Providing EEE status to Agniveer Fund.

Proposals relating to MSMEs

Describing MSMEs as growth engines of our economy, the Budget proposes enhanced limits for micro enterprises and certain professionals for availing the benefit of presumptive taxation. To support MSMEs in timely receipt of payments, the Budget allows deduction for expenditure incurred on payments made to them only when payment is actually made.

Cooperation

The Budget has a slew of proposals for the cooperative sector. New cooperatives that commence manufacturing activities till 31st March next year shall get the benefit of a lower tax rate of 15%. The Budget provides an opportunity to sugar cooperatives to claim payments made to sugarcane farmers for the period prior to assessment year 2016-17 as expenditure.

A higher limit of ₹ 2 lakh per member has been provided for cash deposits to and loans in cash by Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies and Primary Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks. The Budget proposes a higher limit of ₹ 3 crore for TDS on cash withdrawal for cooperative societies.

Start-ups

The Budget proposes to extend the date of incorporation for income tax benefits to start-ups from 31.03.2023 to 31.03.2024. It also provides the benefit of carry forward of losses on change of shareholding of start-ups from 7 years of incorporation to 10 years.

Amendments in CGST Act

The Budget provides for amending the CGST Act so as to raise the minimum threshold of tax amount for launching prosecution under GST from ₹ 1 crore to ₹ 2 crore, except for the offence of issuance of invoices without supply of goods and services or both.

The compounding amount will be reduced from the present range of 50 to 150% of tax amount to the range of 25 to 100%. It will also decriminalize certain clauses of the Act like obstruction and preventing of any officer from discharge of his duties, deliberate tempering of evidence or failure to supply the information.

Implications of tax changes

Announcing the changes in the direct and indirect taxes, the Finance Minister said that revenue of about ₹38,000 crore will be foregone as a result of these proposals, while revenue of about ₹3,000 crore will be additionally mobilized. She said thus the total revenue foregone is about ₹35,000 crore annually on account of these proposals.



INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

Indus Waters Treaty 1960

The Indus Waters Treaty is a water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan signed in 1960.

- The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) between India and Pakistan marks its 60th anniversary on 19th September 2020.
- In August 25, 2021 Pakistan raised objections to a mega 624 MW project over the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir citing that the dam was in violation of the Indus Water treaty. But the Indian government firmly asserted that the construction of the dam was within the established norms of the treaty.
- India sends notice to Pakistan to amend 1960 Indus Water Treaty.

Pakistan approaches the Permanent Court of Arbitrage at The Hague over two hydropower projects in Jammu & Kashmir; Indian officials say Pakistan stance is against the agreed mode of dispute resolution

- India announced that it wants to modify the 62-year-old Indus Water Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan, citing what it called Pakistan's "intransigence" in resolving disputes over the Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects, both in Jammu and Kashmir.

India's notice has been sent under Article 12 (3). It says: (3) The provisions of this Treaty may from time to time be modified by a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two Governments.

Historical Background

Since the partition of India in 1947, the Indus River had been a bone of contention between the four countries through which it runs – India, Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan. The river originates from Tibet.

- India got control over the three eastern rivers, which are:
 - Ravi
 - Beas
 - Sutlej
- All the waters of the Eastern Rivers shall be available for the unrestricted use of India until the arise of any unwanted situation.
- Pakistan got control over the three western rivers, which are:
 - Indus
 - Chenab
 - Jhelum
- A Permanent Indus Commission was set up by the United Nations for resolving any disputes that may arise in water sharing, with a mechanism for arbitration to resolve conflicts amicably.
- According to the treaty, India can use the water from the western rivers for domestic, non-consumptive needs such as storage, irrigation, and also the generation of electricity.
- The treaty gives India 20% of the water from the Indus River System and the rest 80% to Pakistan.
- In executing any scheme of flood protection or flood control each country (India/Pakistan) will avoid, as far as practicable, any material damage to the other country.
- The use of the natural channels of the rivers for the discharge of flood or other excess waters shall be free and not subject to limitation by either India or Pakistan, and neither of the countries shall have any claim against the other in respect of any damage caused by such use.



FINANCE & INSURANCE

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, first proposed in October 2013, is a development bank dedicated to lending for infrastructure projects.

The primary goals of AIIB are to address the expanding infrastructure needs across Asia, enhance regional integration, promote economic development and improve public access to social services.

Silk Road Fund

The Silk Road Fund would invest in businesses rather than lend money to the projects. The Karot Hydropower Project, 50 km from Islamabad, Pakistan, is the first project.

The Chinese government has promised to provide Pakistan with at least US\$350 million by 2030 to finance this station. The Sanxia Construction Corporation commenced work in January 2016.

Projects

The land corridors include:

- The New Eurasian Land Bridge, which runs from Western China to Western Russia through Kazakhstan, and includes the Silk Road Railway through China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany.
- Another corridor will run from Northern China through Mongolia to the Russian Far East. The Russian government-established Russian Direct Investment Fund and China's China Investment Corporation, a Chinese government investment agency, partnered in 2012 to create the Russia-China Investment Fund, which concentrates on opportunities in bilateral integration.
- The China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor, which will run from Western China to Turkey.
- The China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridor, which will run from Southern China to Singapore.
- The Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, which will turn Nepal from a landlocked to a land-linked country.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is also classified as "closely related to the Belt and Road Initiative", a US\$62 billion collection of infrastructure projects throughout Pakistan which aims to rapidly modernize Pakistan's transportation networks, energy infrastructure, and economy.

- CPEC and Gwadar port infrastructure is particularly significant because it opens routes independent of the Malacca strait.

Ice Silk Road

In addition to the Maritime Silk Road, Russia and China are reported to have agreed to jointly build an 'Ice Silk Road' along the Northern Sea Route in the Arctic, along a maritime route within Russian territorial waters.

Super grid

The super grid project aims to develop six ultra high voltage electrical grids across China, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. The wind power resources of Central Asia would form one component of this grid.

Additionally proposed

The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM) was proposed to run from southern China to Myanmar and was initially officially classified as "closely related to the Belt and Road Initiative".

Since the second Belt and Road Forum in 2019, BCIM has been dropped from the list of projects due to India's refusal to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Reactions and criticism

Moscow has been an early partner of China, and Russia and China now have altogether 150 common projects including natural gas pipelines and the Polar Silk Road.

Singapore does not need massive external financing or technical assistance for domestic infrastructure building, but has repeatedly endorsed the BRI and cooperated in related projects in a quest for global relevance and to strengthen economic ties with BRI recipients. It is also one of the largest investors in the project. Furthermore, there is a strategic defensive factor: making sure a single country is not the single dominant factor in Asian economics.

Philippines historically has been closely tied to the United States, China sought its support for the BRI in terms of the quest for dominance in the South China Sea. The Philippines adjusted its policy in favor of Chinese claims in the South China Sea.

Greece, Croatia, and 14 other Eastern European countries are already dealing with China within the framework of the BRI. In March 2019, Italy was the first member of the Group of Seven nations to join the BRI.

Despite initially criticising BRI, the former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad pledged support for the BRI project in 2019.

United States, interpret it as a plan for a sinocentric international trade network. In response the United States, Japan, and Australia had formed a counter initiative, the Blue Dot Network in 2019, followed by the G7's Build Back Better World initiative in 2021.

The United States proposes a counter-initiative called the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy" (FOIP). US officials have articulated the strategy as having three pillars – security, economics, and governance. At the beginning of June 2019, there has been a redefinition of the general definitions of "free" and "open" into four stated principles – respect for sovereignty and independence; peaceful resolution of disputes; free, fair, and reciprocal trade; and adherence to international rules and norms.

India has repeatedly objected to China's Belt and Road Initiative. In particular, they believe the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) project ignores New Delhi's essential concerns about its sovereignty and territorial integrity.



AGRICULTURE

Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)

Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), being registered cooperative societies, have been providing credit and other services to their members. PACS generally provide the following facilities to their members:

- i. Input facilities in form of cash or kind component
- ii. Agriculture implements on hiring basis
- iii. Storage facility

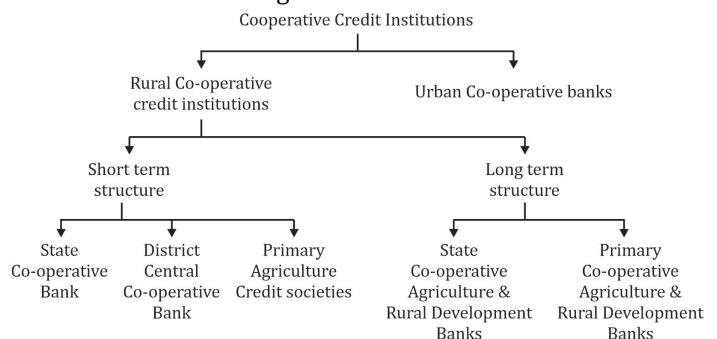
Units which both encourage and enable their farmer members strive towards better returns on agricultural produce, adopt latest technology to increase agricultural production, use new technology & High-Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds store their produce in a scientific way to minimise storage losses and also provide pledge loan against this scientifically stored produce to bridge their credit gap.

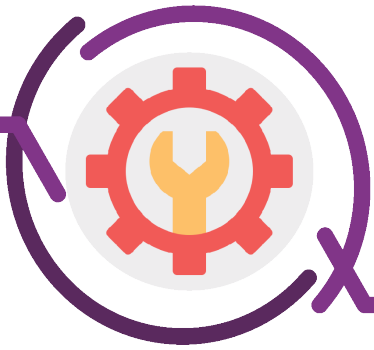
In order to enable PACS to provide more services to their members and generate income for themselves, an initiative has been taken to develop PACS as Multi Service Centers. This will enable PACS to provide ancillary services to their members and diversify their activities.

Assistance under Producers Organization Development Fund (PODF) is available to StCooperative Banks/Central Cooperative Banks and PACS for this purpose.

The Scheme has the following components:

1. **Agro-Storage centre:** Upgradation of the existing storage facility or construction of new godown along with sorting/grading unit as per Negotiable Warehouse Receipt System which will enable them to issue warehouse receipts. Based on these receipts, farmers can get loans against the crop stored and can cultivate the next crop, thus facilitating better price by holding crops without affecting the fund flow position.
2. **Agro-service Centre:** Purchase of hi-tech agri-implements like power tiller, land leveller, rotary slasher, movers, seed driller, multi crop planter, paddy transplanter, sprayers, combine harvester etc. depending upon the requirements of members. The earning will be from the rental of these equipment.
3. **Agro-processing centre:**
 - Primary Processing: Sorting, grading unit, waxing/polishing unit, pre-cooling chambers, etc.
 - Secondary Processing: Value addition to produce e.g. Mini rice mill, atta chaki, horticulture produce processing etc.
4. **Agri -information centre:** Testing lab for soil & water, creating panel of experts for providing services on payment basis, knowledge dissemination centre, and arrange training for farmers. The testing lab & expert guidance will be available to farmers at a cost.
5. **Agri Transportation & Marketing Facilities:** Procurement of produce, direct market linkage after aggregation /processing, setting up of rural mart etc. The PACS, which are either in the area of marketing or intend to undertake this activity, may create this channel to facilitate the farmers in marketing.





3. INDUSTRIAL ISSUES



AUTOMOBILE

Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) Scheme Phase-I & II

FAME INDIA SCHEME

Why in news?
The Government recently announced the revised FAME II subsidy for promoting EV usage in the country.

What is FAME?
Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) was launched by Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises to give a boost to development of Electric Vehicles.

Details

- FAME India is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan.
- Subsidy can be claimed by two wheelers, three wheelers, electric and hybrid cars and electric buses under the scheme.

Implementing Ways

- Establishing charging stations
- Incentivize buyers
- Publicizing benefits of Electric Vehicles

Benefits

- Demand for petrol and diesel is expected to reduce.
- Creation of new jobs in automobile sector.
- Reduction in pollution-induced health problems.

To promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicles, the Central Government launched the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) 1 Scheme in 2015.

The National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020 was launched in 2013 to achieve national fuel security by promoting hybrid and electric vehicles in the country. As part of the NEMMP 2020, the Ministry of Heavy Industries launched FAME India Scheme in 2015 to promote adoption of electric/hybrid vehicles (xEVs) in India.

FAME India Scheme operates in two phases. These are,

- **Phase I:** The first phase of Fame India Scheme started in 2015 and was functional till 31st March 2019 with a budget outlay of Rs 895 Crore.
- **Phase II:** The second phase of this scheme started in April 2019 and will continue till 31st March 2024.

FAME India – Phase-3 FAME India Phase I had four focus areas - technological development, demand generation, pilot project and charging infrastructure components

FAME India – Phase 2 Based on the experience gained during Phase I of FAME Scheme and suggestions of various stakeholders including industry associations, Phase II was approved with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crores for a period of five years commencing from April 01, 2019.

FAME –II Redesign FAME India II Scheme was redesigned in June 2021 based on experience particularly during Covid19 pandemic and feedback from industry and users. The redesigned scheme aims at faster proliferation of Electric Vehicles by lowering the upfront costs.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai on 15 June 2001.
- The SCO currently comprises eight Member States (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), four Observer States interested in acceding to full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and six “Dialogue Partners” (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey).
- In 2021, the decision was made to start the accession process of Iran to the SCO as a full member, and Egypt, Qatar as well as Saudi Arabia became dialogue partners.
- Since its inception in 2001, the SCO has mainly focused on regional security issues, its fight against regional terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism. The SCO’s priorities also include regional development.

- The SCO has been an observer in the UN General Assembly since 2005.
- In April 2010, the UN and SCO Secretariats signed a Joint Declaration on Cooperation. SCO Secretariat has also established partnerships with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in addition to its ongoing cooperation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the UN Office on Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT).

INDIA and SCO

From the Buddhist monks to spice traders, from adventurous explorers to Sufi saints, interaction between India and the SCO Member States has led to exchange of goods, fusion of ideas, introduction of new cuisines and art-forms.

India's membership of SCO in 2017, was therefore, a reaffirmation of India's keenness to deepen its historic ties with the region.

In 2020, India hosted for the first time, the meeting of SCO Council of Heads of Government, the second-highest decision-making body of the organization. India has carved a niche for itself by emphasizing on three new pillars of cooperation in SCO – Startups & Innovation, Science & Technology and Traditional Medicine.

The next important milestone will be India's Chairmanship of SCO Council of Heads of State for the very first time beginning September 2022 for a period of one year.

SCO summit 2022 was held recently in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. India has taken over as Chairperson of the SCO for 2023, and will host leaders of all SCO countries at a summit in Delhi expected in mid-2023.



INTERNATIONAL TRADE

China's Belt and Road Initiative

India has again refused to endorse China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), with external affairs minister S. Jaishankar asserting that any connectivity project should respect the territorial integrity of nations and international law.

The Belt and Road Initiative, known within China as the One Belt One Road is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in more than 150 countries and international organizations.

It is considered a centerpiece of the Chinese leader Xi Jinping foreign policy. The BRI forms a central component of Xi's "Major Country Diplomacy" strategy, which calls for China to assume a greater leadership role for global affairs in accordance with its rising power and status. It has been compared to the American Marshall Plan. As of January 2023, 151 countries were listed as having signed up to the BRI. Xi originally announced the strategy as the "Silk Road Economic Belt" during an official visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013.

"Belt" is short for the "Silk Road Economic Belt," referring to the proposed overland routes for road and rail transportation through landlocked Central Asia along the famed historical trade routes of the Western Regions; whereas "road" is short for the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road", referring to the Indo-Pacific sea routes through Southeast Asia to South Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Examples of Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure investments include ports, skyscrapers, railroads, roads, bridges, airports, dams, coal-fired power stations, and railroad tunnels.

While some countries, especially the United States, view the project critically because of possible Chinese influence, others point to the creation of a new global growth engine by connecting and moving Asia, Europe and Africa closer together.

The G7 industrial country Italy has been a partner in the development of the project since March 2019.

According to estimates, the entire project today affects more than 60% of the world's population and approximately 35% of the global economy. Trade along the Silk Road could soon account for almost 40% of total world trade, with a large part being by sea. The land route of the Silk Road also appears to remain a niche project in terms of transport volume in the future.

The maritime silk road runs with its connections from the Chinese coast to the south, linking Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, and Jakarta, then westward linking the Sri Lankan capital city of Colombo, and Malé, capital of the Maldives, and onward to East Africa, and the city of Mombasa, in Kenya.

From there the linkage moves northward to Djibouti, through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean, thereby linking Haifa, Istanbul, and Athens, to the Upper Adriatic region to the northern Italian hub of Trieste, with its international free port and its rail connections to Central Europe and the North Sea.



NEWS MEDIA

“Broadcast Infrastructure Network Development (BIND)” Scheme

**CABINET APPROVED
BIND SCHEME WITH AN
OUTLAY OF RS.2,539.61 CRORES**

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the proposal of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting regarding Central Sector Scheme “Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development” (BIND) at a cost of ₹2,539.61 crore for infrastructure development of Prasar Bharati i.e. All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD).

The “Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development” scheme of the Ministry is the vehicle for providing financial support to Prasar Bharati for expenses related to expansion and upgradation of its broadcasting infrastructure, content development and civil work related to the organization.

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The Cabinet on 4th January, 2023 approved the “Broadcast Infrastructure Network Development (BIND)” Scheme with an outlay of Rs. 2539.61 Cr for modernization, upgradation and expansion of All India Radio and Doordarshan for the five-year period ending 2025-26.

The plan aims at major upgradation to create better infrastructure and widen the public broadcaster’s reach in LWE, border and strategic areas.

Development of high-quality content for both domestic and international audience, availability of diverse content by upgrading capacity of DTH platform to accommodate more channels will expand the choice available to the audience.

The plan also aims at expansion of FM network primarily in tier II & tier-III cities with focus on LWE and aspirational districts.



SPACE TECHNOLOGY

NISAR

The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission is a joint project between NASA and ISRO to co-develop and launch a dual-frequency synthetic aperture radar on an Earth observation satellite.

The satellite will be the first radar imaging satellite to use dual frequencies. It will be used for remote sensing, to observe and understand natural processes on Earth.

Its left-facing instruments will study the Antarctic cryosphere.

With a total cost estimated at US\$1.5 billion, NISAR is likely to be the world’s most expensive Earth-imaging satellite.

The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar, or NISAR satellite, will use advanced radar imaging to map the elevation of Earth’s land and ice masses 4 to 6 times a month at resolutions of 5 to 10 meters.

It is designed to observe and measure some of the planet’s most complex natural processes, including ecosystem disturbances, ice-sheet collapse, and natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes and landslides.

NASA will provide the mission’s L-band synthetic aperture radar (SAR), a high-rate telecommunication subsystem for scientific data GPS receivers, a solid-state recorder, and a payload data subsystem.

ISRO will provide the satellite bus, an S-band synthetic aperture radar, the launch vehicle, and associated launch services.

The satellite will be launched from India aboard a GSLV in Q1 of 2024.

The orbit will be a Sun-synchronous, dawn-to-dusk type.

The planned mission life is three years.

The project has passed the first stage of the design validation phase and has been reviewed and approved by NASA.



SCIENTIFIC INVENTION

Medium-Density Amorphous Ice

University College London researcher Alexander Rosu-Finsen and his colleagues discovered a medium-density amorphous ice formed by ball milling hexagonal ice at low temperatures. Ball-milling is regularly used to make amorphous materials, but it had never been applied to ice.

Frozen water can take many forms. There are 20 known common or crystalline phases of water ice and at least two families of amorphous form.

Unlike common ice, whose molecules are regularly arranged in a hexagonal lattice, amorphous forms lack a highly ordered crystalline structure.

Although almost all frozen water on Earth exists as crystalline ice, amorphous ice is likely the most common structure for water in the Universe at large.

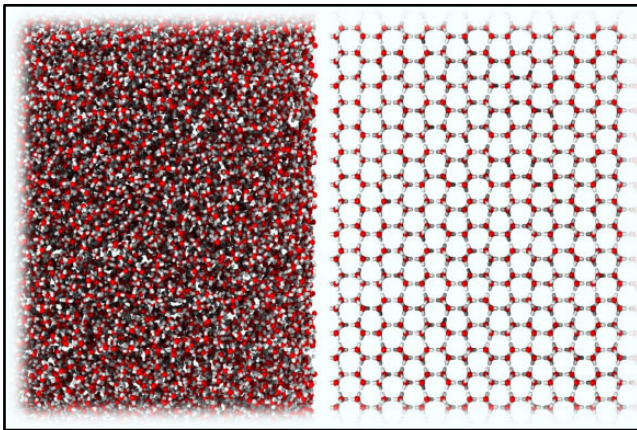
In general, amorphous ices are distinguished by their densities, with low-density amorphous ice having a density of 0.94 g/cm³ and high-density amorphous ice forms, which start at 1.13 g/cm³.

However, neither crystalline nor amorphous ices have a form with a density near that of liquid water (1 g/cm^3). This density gap is a cornerstone of our current understanding of water.

Dr. Rosu-Finsen and co-authors used a process called ball milling, vigorously shaking ordinary ice together with steel balls in a jar cooled to 77 K (minus 200 degrees Celsius).

They found that, rather than ending up with small bits of ordinary ice, the process yielded a novel amorphous form of ice that, unlike all other known ices, had the same density (1.06 g/cm^3) as liquid water and whose state resembled water in solid form.

"With other forms of [amorphous] ice, if you compress them and you release the pressure, it's like nothing happened," Salzmann said. "But the MDA [medium-density amorphous ice] somehow has this ability to store the mechanical energy and release it through heating."



TECHNOLOGY

Qualcomm Introduces Snapdragon Satellite, The World's First Satellite-Based Solution Capable of Supporting Two-Way Messaging

Qualcomm and Iridium entered into an agreement to bring satellite-based connectivity to next-generation premium Android smartphones.

- Snapdragon Satellite offers truly global coverage¹ from pole to pole and can support two-way messaging for emergency use, SMS texting, and other messaging applications – for a variety of purposes such as emergencies or recreation in remote, rural and offshore locations.

- The solution for smartphones utilizes Iridium's weather-resilient L-band spectrum for uplink and downlink.
- Snapdragon Satellite is planned to support 5G Non-Terrestrial Networks (NTN), as NTN satellite infrastructure and constellations become available.
- Beyond satellites, Non-terrestrial networks (NTN) refer to networks, or segments of networks, using an airborne or spaceborne vehicle for transmission. Airborne vehicles refer to High Altitude Platforms (HAPs) encompassing Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) - including tethered UAS, Lighter than Air UAS and Heavier than Air UAS - all operating at altitude; typically between 8 and 50 km, quasi-stationary.
- Non-terrestrial networks will
- Help foster the 5G service roll out in un-served or underserved areas to upgrade the performance of terrestrial networks
- Reinforce service reliability by providing service continuity for user equipment or for moving platforms (e.g. passenger vehicles-aircraft, ships, high speed trains, buses)
- Increase service availability everywhere; especially for critical communications, future railway/ maritime/ aeronautical communications.
- Enable 5G network scalability through the provision of efficient multicast/broadcast resources for data delivery towards the network edges or even directly to the user equipment



Non-Terrestrial Networks (NTN)

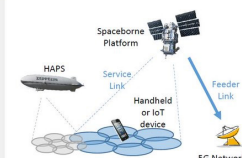
Adopting NR to non-terrestrial networks for enhanced coverage, reliability and availability

Use Cases and Applications

- Provide connectivity to unserved/underserved areas that cannot be covered via traditional terrestrial 5G networks
 - Remote M2M/IOT devices, moving platforms (e.g. aircraft, marine vessels, high-speed trains), suburban/rural areas
- Ensuring service availability/reliability anywhere, especially for critical communications

NTN-specific Challenges

- Very high propagation delay (up to 250 mSec one-way trip)
- Doppler Shift
- Large cell sizes (up to 1000 km diameter)
- Moving cells
- Very high speed mobility UEs (1000 km/hr)



Infrastructure

- Space-borne (GEO, MEO, LEO) vehicles as well as HAPS (High Altitude Platform Stations).
- Terrestrial Gateway connected to core network



4. ENVIRONMENT ISSUES



CONSERVATION

Keoladeo National Park

The Rajasthan state Forest Department has proposed to construct a zoo inside Keoladeo National Park, a World Heritage Site popularly known as Bharatpur bird sanctuary, to display a range of wetland species, including rhinos, water buffaloes, crocs, dolphins and exotic species.

The purpose of this zoo, called Wetland ex-situ Conservation Establishment (WESCE), says the Detailed Project Report (DPR) of the Rajasthan Forestry and Biodiversity Development Project (RFBDP), is "to rejuvenate the biodiversity of Keoladeo National Park, thereby boosting its outstanding universal values."

Keoladeo National Park or Keoladeo Ghana National Park (formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary) is a famous avifauna sanctuary in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, India, that hosts thousands of birds, especially during the winter season.

It was declared a protected sanctuary in 1971 and established as a national park on 10 March 1982. It is also a World Heritage Site.

Keoladeo Ghana National Park is a man-made and man-managed wetland and one of the national parks of India. The reserve protects Bharatpur from frequent floods, provides grazing grounds for village cattle, and earlier was primarily used as a waterfowl hunting ground.

the area was designated as a bird sanctuary on 13 March 1976 and a Ramsar site under the Wetland Convention in October 1981.

KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK

Location: Bharatpur (27°13' N; 77°31' E) **Area:** 2873 ha **Depth:** 1-2m

Source of Water: Ghambiri river, Gowardhan drain and Chambal pipeline

Values and Benefits:

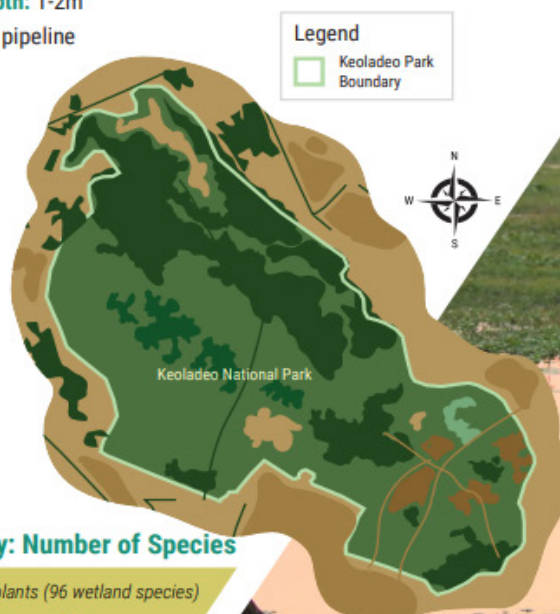
- A UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Unique mosaic of habitats that include wetlands, woodlands, scrub forests, grasslands that supports the highest congregation of waterbirds in the region.
- Serves as an important groundwater recharge site and critical to hydrology of the region
- The park supports employment of local community members including nature guides, rickshaw pullers and hoteliers thereby supporting the economy of Bharatpur town.
- Noteworthy species include *rosy and dalmatian pelican, siberian crane, black-necked stork, painted stork greyilag goose, bar-headed goose, sarus crane, hog deer, sambhar deer, spotted deer, jackal and hyena*

Threats:

- **Unavailability of water:** Changes in hydrology and water allocations impacting inflows and unreliable and insufficient release of water from the main source i.e. Pachna Dam on Gambhiri River.
- **Invasive species:** Water hyacinth (*Eichornia crassipes*), *Paspalum distichum*, *Prosopis juliflora* and African catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) are a threat to the natural species
- **Land use changes in the catchment**

Biodiversity: Number of Species

379 flowering plants (96 wetland species)
50 fishes **376** birds **25** reptiles
27 mammals **7** amphibians



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which of the following statements are true about Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.

1. It's a flagship scheme under Ministry of Social Justice.
2. PMKVY 1.0 has two components, namely, Central component being implemented through National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and State component being implemented through State Skill Development Mission of the State/UT.

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. both 1 and 2 D. none

Ans. D

Sol. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by National Skill Development Corporation

The PMKVY (except PMKVY 1.0 (2015-16)) has two components, namely, Central component being implemented through National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and State component being implemented through State Skill Development Mission of the State/UT.

2. The economic agenda for achieving this vision Amrit Kaal – an empowered and inclusive economy, would focus on which of the following priorities :

1. facilitating ample opportunities for citizens, especially the youth, to fulfil their aspirations;
2. providing strong impetus to growth and job creation; and
3. strengthening micro-economic stability

- A. 1, 2 B. 2, 3
C. 3, 1 D. All

Ans. A

Sol. Its macro economic stability not micro. Micro economic issues

3. What is the Vision for Amrit Kaal?

- A. an empowered economy
- B. an inclusive economy
- C. Both
- D. None

Ans. C

4. The economic agenda for achieving Vision for Amrit Kaal would focus on:

1. facilitating ample opportunities for citizens, especially the youth, to fulfil their aspirations;
2. providing strong impetus to growth and job creation; and
3. strengthening macro-economic stability

- A. 1, 2 B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3 D. 1, 2, 3

Ans. D

5. Which of the following statements are true about PM Vishwakarma KAushal Samman (PM VIKAS)

1. Enable them to improve the quality, scale and reach of their products, integrating them with the MSME value chain.
2. Benefit the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, women and people belonging to the weaker sections.
3. include not only financial support but also access to advanced skill training, knowledge of modern digital techniques and efficient green technologies, brand promotion, linkage with local and global markets, digital payments, and social security

- A. 1, 2 B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3 D. 1, 2, 3

Ans. D

6. Which of the following statements are true about Saptarishi: Seven guiding priorities of Budget 2023-24

1. Inclusive Development
2. Reaching the Last Mile
3. Infrastructure and Investment
4. Unleashing the Potential
5. Green Growth
6. Youth Power
7. Financial Sector

- A. 1,2,4,5,7 B. 1,3,4,5,6,7
C. 2,3,4,5,6,7 D. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

Ans. D

7. Which of the following statements are true about Shree Anna

1. India is projecting as Global Hub for Millets: 'Shree Anna'
2. India is the largest producer and second largest exporter of 'Shree Anna' in the world as it grows several types of 'Shree Anna' such as jowar, ragi, bajra, kuttu, ramdana, kangni, kutki, kodo, cheena, and sama.
3. Indian Institute of Millet Research, Bangalore will be supported as the Centre of Excellence for sharing best practices, research and technologies at the international level.

- A. 1, 2 B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3 D. 1, 2, 3

Ans. A

Sol. Indian Institute of Millet Research is in Hyderabad

8. Which of the following is true about health sector in Budget 2023-24

1. A Mission to eliminate cancer by 2047 will be launched.
2. It will entail awareness creation, universal screening of 7 crore people in the age group of 0-40 years in affected tribal areas.

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. both D. None

Ans. B

Sol. A Mission to eliminate Sickle Cell Anaemia by 2047 will be launched.

9. Which of the following statements are true about Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission

1. It focuses on to improve socio-economic conditions of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs)
2. on the basis of the Dhebar Commission report, a criterion for identifying Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups was established.
3. As per Census 2011, there are a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 17 states and one Union Territory (UT).
4. The categorization is done by the Ministry of Tribal affairs.

- A. 1,2,3 B. 2,3,4
C. 1,3,4 D. 1,2,3,4

Ans. A

Sol. The categorization is done by the Ministry of Home Affairs and not by the Ministry of Tribal affairs.

10. Which of the following statements are correct about launched National Green Hydrogen Mission

1. It is a program to incentivise the commercial production of green hydrogen and make India a net exporter of the fuel.
2. Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Programme (SIGHT) will fund the domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers and produce green hydrogen.
3. when electric current is passed through water, it splits it into elemental oxygen and hydrogen through electrolysis. And if the electricity used for this process comes from a renewable source like wind or solar then the hydrogen thus produced is referred to as green hydrogen.
4. Hydrogen is a key industrial fuel that has a variety of applications like the production of ammonia, steel, refineries and electricity.

- A. 1,2,3 B. 2,3,4
C. 1,3,4 D. 1,2,3,4

Ans. D

11. Which of the following statements are true about GOBARdhan scheme

1. The Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBAR-DHAN) scheme is implemented under the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin-Phase 2, by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation under the Jal Shakti ministry.
2. The scheme aims to augment income of farmers by converting biodegradable waste into compressed biogas (CBG).

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. both D. none

Ans. C

12. Which of the following statements are true about Shanghai Cooperation Organization

1. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai on 15 June 2001.
2. The SCO currently comprises eight Member States (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan).
3. India has taken over as Chairperson of the SCO for 2023, and will host leaders of all SCO countries at a summit in Delhi expected in mid-2023.

- A. 1,2 B. 2,3
C. 1,3 D. 1,2,3

Ans. D

13. Which of the following statements are true about National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)

1. The scheme is being undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE) and aims to eradicate unsafe sewer and septic tank cleaning practices.
2. Sanitation workers are collectivized into SHGs and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises

3. Increased awareness amongst sanitation services seekers (individuals and institutions) to seek services from registered and skilled sanitation workers

- A. 1,2 B. 2,3
C. 1,3 D. 1,2,3

Ans. D

14. Which of the following statements are true about Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) Scheme - Phase I & II

1. The first phase of Fame India Scheme started in 2015 and was functional till 31st March 2019.
2. The second phase of this scheme started in April 2019 and will continue till 31st March 2024.

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. both D. none

Ans. C

15. Which of the following statements are true about "Broadcast Infrastructure Network Development (BIND)" Scheme

1. It aims at modernization, upgradation and expansion of All India Radio and Doordarshan for the five-year period ending 2025-26.
2. The plan also aims at expansion of FM network primarily in tier II & tier-III cities with focus on LWE and aspirational districts.

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. both D. none

Ans. C

16. Which of the following statements are true about NISAR

1. The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission is a joint project between NASA and ISRO to co-develop and launch a dual-frequency synthetic aperture radar on an Earth observation satellite.
2. The satellite will be the first radar imaging satellite to use dual frequencies.

3. It is designed to observe and measure some of the planet's most complex natural processes, including ecosystem disturbances, ice-sheet collapse, and natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes and landslides.

- A. 1,2 B. 2,3
C. 1,3 D. 1,2,3

Ans. D

17. Which of the following statements are true about Medium-Density Amorphous Ice

1. Unlike common ice, whose molecules are regularly arranged in a hexagonal lattice, amorphous forms lack a highly ordered crystalline structure.
2. Although almost all frozen water on Earth exists as crystalline ice, amorphous ice is likely the most common structure for water in the Universe at large.
3. MDA [medium-density amorphous ice] somehow has this ability to store the mechanical energy and release it through heating.
4. Eating a freezer wall's ice is life threatening as it's a medium density amorphous ice.

- A. 1,2,3 B. 2,3,4
C. 1,3,4 D. 1,2,3,4

Ans. A

18. The core infrastructure elements in a Smart City are

1. Sanitation including solid waste management
2. Efficient urban mobility and public transport
3. Robust IT connectivity and digitalisation
4. Good governance, especially e-governance and citizen participation

5. Safety and security of citizens, particularly women, children and the elderly

6. Action against drug addiction

- A. 1,2,3,4,5 B. 2,3,4,5,6
C. 1,2,3,5,6 D. 1,2,3,4,5,6

Ans. A

19. Which company has developed The World's First Satellite-Based Solution Capable of Supporting Two-Way Messaging

- A. Nokia B. Samsung
C. Larsen & Tubro D. Qualcomm

Ans. D

Sol. Qualcomm Introduces Snapdragon Satellite, The World's First Satellite-Based Solution Capable of Supporting Two-Way Messaging

20. Which of the following statements are true about Non-Terrestrial Networks (NTN) ?

1. a Non Terrestrial Network positions elements of the network infrastructure overhead in the form of Satellites, HAPS (High Altitude Platform Stations) or Drones (Unmanned Aircraft Systems).
2. in addition to providing connectivity to those rural communities with currently no or little access to the Internet, industries operating in remote areas such as mining, oil and gas exploration, not to mention research stations, could also benefit from a significant increase in both coverage and capacity.
3. natural disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis often render traditional network infrastructure inoperable at the most critical time.

- A. 1,2 B. 2,3
C. 1,3 D. 1,2,3

Ans. D

