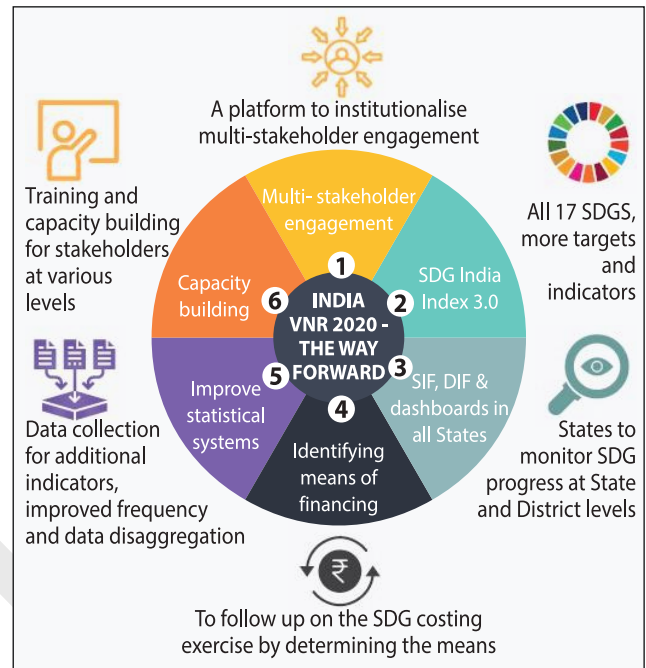


NEWS TODAY

NITI AAYOG PRESENTS INDIA'S SECOND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (VNR) AT UN'S HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF) MEETING

- India VNR 2020 report titled **Decade of Action: Taking SDGs from Global to Local** was released.
 - VNR presents a review of progress on 17 SDGs, India's approach to **localising SDGs**, and strengthening means of implementation.
 - HLPF is UN platform for follow-up and review of progress on 17 SDGs.
 - NITI Aayog has the mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs at national and sub-national level.
- Key findings**
 - SDG 1 (No poverty):** Multidimensional poverty reduced by half to 27.5% between 2005-06 and 2015-16.
 - SDG3 (Good Health and Well-being):** Out of pocket expenditure as a percentage of total health expenditure has declined from 64.2% in 2013-14 to 58.7% in 2016-17.
 - SDG 4 (Quality Education):** Gross Enrolment Ratio at elementary and secondary levels was at 91.64% and 79.6% respectively in 2018-19.
 - SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** In 2017, 77% women's access to bank accounts, 14.4% MPs in Lok Sabha are women.
 - SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure):** Ease of Doing Business ranking improved to 63 in 2019.
 - Four crucial areas of action identified:** Improvement of statistical system; monitoring at local level; capacity building of all stakeholders; and SDG financing.



INDIAN RAILWAYS (IR) ON MISSION MODE OF BECOMING A GREEN RAILWAY BY 2030

- To achieve net zero carbon emission, IR has taken steps towards railway electrification, improving energy efficiency of locomotives & trains, fitting bio toilets in coaches and switching to renewable sources of energy.
- Major initiatives taken**
 - Electrification of all routes on Broad Gauge (BG) by December 2023.**
 - IR has completed electrification of more than 63% of BG routes.
 - Initiatives to promote clean energy and to reduce fuel burden of IR**
 - 100 MW of Solar plants** have been commissioned on roof-tops of various buildings, using its land potential to produce power from land Based Solar installations for running trains.
 - 103 MW wind-based power plants** have already been commissioned
 - In order to save fuel (diesel),** 505 pairs of trains have been converted to Head on Generation (HOG).
 - In HOG, **power is drawn from Overhead Electric supply** instead of using power generators cars.
 - Other Green initiatives**
 - A total of **69,000 coaches** have been fitted with **2,44,000 bio-toilets.**
 - IR has started with **100% LED illumination of buildings and stations.**

GOOGLE COMMITTED TO A \$10-BILLION INVESTMENT IN INDIA OVER NEXT 5-7 YEARS

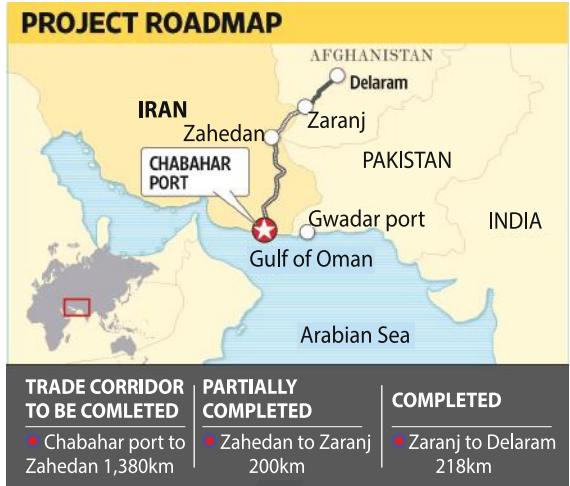
- Google for India Digitisation Fund** is a fund being setup by Google through which it will invest \$10 billion in the country.
 - It will be invested **through a mix of equity investments, partnerships, operations, infrastructure and ecosystem investments.**
 - With this Google plans to scale up its India operations and **become a key player in India's digital ecosystem.**
- Focus areas:** affordable access to Internet, information for every Indian in his/her own language, and building new products and services that are relevant to India's unique needs, including consumer tech, education, health and agriculture.
- Importance of investment:**
 - India is **one of the biggest markets** for any global digital company.
 - Broadband user base in India has crossed 500 million.
 - Countering rivals Facebook and Amazon,** which recently invested billions of dollars in India.
 - India has been the **test bed for several of Google's products** and services. Ex: Google pay.

NATIONAL BANK FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (NABARD) LAUNCHES INITIATIVES FOR RURAL INDIA ON ITS 39TH FOUNDATION DAY

- These steps **will boost offtake of economic activities in areas grappling with reverse migration.**
- NABARD announced **Rs 5,000 crore of refinance scheme for banks and financial institutions** for providing finance to the beneficiaries of its 2,150 watershed development projects.
 - These projects cover 2.3 million hectares of rainfed area, watershed and tribal development project areas.
 - Assistance will be available for three years till FY23.
 - NABARD watershed development programmes **aim to reduce risk associated with dry land farming systems and livelihood through holistic development.**
- NABARD also earmarked another **Rs 5,000 crore for turning Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) into multi service centres** (one-stop shops for meeting the varied needs of the farmers.)
 - It is a **grant-based scheme for computerization** to enable PACS to provide seamless credit services to their farmer members.
 - PACS support farmers in post-harvest and marketing activities along with role in physical and financial supply chain of commodities.
- NABARD is a **refinance institution** under NABARD Act, 1981 with an objective of **providing and regulating credit and other facilities for the promotion and development of Agriculture, Small-scale industries, Cottage and village industries, Handicrafts** and other allied economic activities in rural areas.

IRAN DROPS INDIA FROM CHABAHAR RAIL PROJECT FROM CHABAHAR TO ZAHEDAN

- Iran has decided to proceed with construction of Chabahar rail project on its own, citing **delays by India in funding and starting the project.**
- In 2016, India and Iran signed an **agreement to construct a rail line from Chabahar port to Zahedan**, along the border with Afghanistan.
 - It was part of **India's commitment to trilateral agreement** between India, Iran and Afghanistan **to build an alternate trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia.**
 - When **linked to International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, Chabahar-Zahedan-Zaranj corridor would connect South Asia and Europe.
- However, India never began work due to worries that these could attract U.S. sanctions.
 - Though USA had **provided a sanctions waiver** for Chabahar port and rail line to Zahedan, it has been difficult to find equipment suppliers and partners.
- This step by Iran also assumes significance as Iran and China are **close to finalising a 25-year Strategic Partnership deal**, which will include Chinese involvement in Chabahar's duty free zone, an oil refinery nearby, and possibly a larger role in Chabahar port as well.
 - Iran has offered interests to China in the **Bandar-e-Jask port 350 km west of Chabahar.**



STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD 2020 REPORT RELEASED

- The joint report is issued annually by Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNICEF, World Food Programme and WHO.
- **Key highlights**
 - Almost **690 million people in world (8.9% of world population)** are estimated to have been undernourished in 2019.
 - ➔ **COVID-19 pandemic may add between 83 to 132 million people to total number of undernourished** in 2020.
 - Since 2014, **the number of people affected by hunger in the world continues to increase slowly.**
 - ➔ **Key reasons for this trend:** greater number of conflicts, climate-related shocks, economic slowdowns.
 - **World is not on track to achieve the SDG 2.1:** Zero Hunger target by 2030.
 - **Healthy diets are unaffordable to more than 3 billion people** and have hidden costs related to health (SDG 2) and climate (SDG 13).
 - ➔ Unaffordable healthy diets are associated with **increasing food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition.**
 - ➔ **Diet quality** is a critical link between food security and nutrition outcomes.
- **Key suggestions**
 - **Reorient agricultural priorities** towards more nutrition-sensitive food and agricultural production.
 - Avoid **taxation of nutritious foods.**
 - Investments in improved **storage, processing, reduced food losses etc.**

ALSO IN NEWS

Right to Shebaitship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, Supreme Court upheld Shebaitship rights of Travancore royal family in the Padmanabhaswamy temple case. • Shebaitship right refers to right to manage the financial affairs of the deity in the position of a trustee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Shebait is a manager of the property only in title, and, is entitled to custody of both, the property and the idol. ➢ Shebait has no legal claim to the property, which is believed only to rest in the deity (or idol).
Bhutan's 'Yeti territory'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India has proposed to build a road in this territory of Bhutan, which was claimed by China recently. • It will enable quick access to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China. • This region lies in Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary in far-eastern Bhutan.
Anti-smog gun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was recently installed in Delhi to reduce air-pollution mainly concentration of PM10 and PM2.5. • Anti-smog gun is designed to create an ultra-fine fog, comprising very fine water droplets (less than 10-micron in size). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ These tiny water droplets will be spread over a sizeable area with the help of a high-speed fan, which can absorb smallest dust particles in air. • However, experts raised concern that it can suppress or settle the pollutants for some time, but is not a long-term solution.
Pangolins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per 'World Wildlife Crime Report' released by UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Pangolins are the most trafficked wild mammals in the world. • Seizure of their scales increasing tenfold between 2014 and 2018. • The meat and scales of pangolins are used for medicinal purposes in several parts of the world. Pangolin products are also widely used in traditional Chinese medicine. • There are eight species in Pangolins: Chinese, Sunda, Philippine and Indian pangolins; and four African species.
Tangam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an oral language that belongs the greater Tibeto-Burman language family. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It is spoken by Tangams, a community in Arunachal Pradesh. • It is marked 'critically endangered' under UNESCO World Atlas of Endangered Languages. • A recent survey revealed that there are only 253 reported speakers of this language, thus, facing threat of extinction. • Also, more than 26 languages of Arunachal Pradesh have been identified as endangered.