

NEWS TODAY

17th INDIA-VIETNAM JOINT COMMISSION ON TRADE, ECONOMIC, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION

• Key outcomes

- > Enhance their bilateral cooperation in line with **India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and ASEAN's Outlook on Indo-Pacific**.
 - » IPOI was launched by India in 2019 and its pillars include enhancing maritime security, promoting free, fair and mutually beneficial trade and maritime transport and enhancing science and technology cooperation.
 - » ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific envisages ASEAN Centrality as the underlying principle for promoting cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - > Explore closer cooperation in emerging areas such as civil nuclear energy, space, marine sciences and new technologies.
 - > India reaffirmed **development and capacity building assistance to Vietnam** through initiatives such as Quick Impact Projects (QIP), PhD fellowships, projects in water resource management in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region, etc.
 - > Agreed to coordinate closely at multilateral forums, including the UN Security Council.
- In recent years, Vietnam has often turned to India for support over China's increasing activities within its exclusive economic zone in South China Sea.
- > India is one of only three countries with which Vietnam has a comprehensive strategic partnership and ONGC Videsh is engaged in energy production in SCS.



FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS (FPOs) SEEK MAT EXEMPTION TO REALISE FULL BENEFIT

- In 2018 Budget a five-year tax holiday was provided to FPOs to allow them a level playing field in competing with private sector while ensuring better agricultural prices to farmers.
 - > FPO is one type of **Producer Organisation (PO)** where the members are farmers.
 - > A PO is a legal entity formed by primary producers, viz. farmers, milk producers, fishermen, weavers, rural artisans, craftsmen.
- But law requires them to pay minimum alternate tax (MAT) instead. This negates the intended benefits to FPOs.
 - > MAT was created under the direct tax laws, specifically to bring the 'zero-tax paying companies' under the income tax net.
 - > Its objective is to collect minimum tax from such companies, which claim exemptions or deductions under various provisions of the Income Tax Act and generate some revenues for the government.
- **Benefits of FPOs:** Ensure better incomes to producers, can liaison with Government Departments for convergence of programmes, better bargaining power, better access to government services etc.
- Recently, Government approved a central sector scheme **Formation and Promotion of Farmer Produce Organizations** to form and promote 10,000 new FPOs.

GOVERNMENT PLANS TO BRING SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES UNDER ONE UMBRELLA

- Government proposes to bring at least half a dozen social security schemes, including old age pension and insurance, under the ambit of the proposed **Code on Social Security, 2019 (CSS)**.
 - > Social security refers to measures to ensure access to health care and provision of income security to workers.
- CSS, introduced in Lok Sabha 2019, seeks to replace nine laws related to social security, including Employees' Provident Fund Act, 1952, Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, and Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008.
 - > It provides for bringing all existing social security schemes under the code through notification.
- **Existing issues in social security**
 - > Not universal and fragmented approach.
 - > Multiple schemes are currently being administered by different ministries leading to overlap.
 - > Many Agencies, Ministries, Administering Authorities leading to high compliance costs to companies.
 - > Poor Administrative structure & lack of capacities for delivery and enforcement.
- **Expected benefits of move:**
 - > Expected to cover more than 20% of bottom of population.
 - > Effective implementation and avoid duplication.
 - > Reduced compliance costs for companies and Ease of Doing Business.

INDIA RECYCLES ONLY 1% OF ITS CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION (C&D WASTE) WASTE: CSE

- As per data, India generates an estimated 150 million tonnes of C&D waste every year.
 - > But official recycling capacity is a meagre 6,500 tonnes per day — just about 1%.
 - > Moreover, unofficial estimates of total waste generated is three-five times more than official estimate.
 - > C&D Waste means waste created by construction and demolition projects including concrete, brick, painted wood etc.
- **Concerns:**
 - > Toxic dust particles from debris pollute air in cities.
 - > Concrete, bricks and metal waste from construction choke water bodies, green areas and public spaces in cities.
- **Steps taken:**
 - > C&D Waste Rules and Regulations, 2016 have mandated reuse of recycled material.
 - > Under Swachh Bharat Mission, ranking points for C&D waste management for Swachh Survekshan 2021 have been doubled to 100 points.
 - > Bureau of Indian Standards has allowed use of concrete made from recycled material and processed C&D waste.
- **Suggestions:**
 - > A circular economy to turn C&D waste into a resource as demand for primary building material, including minerals, sand, iron etc. is growing.
 - > Proper implementation of C&D Waste Management Rules, 2016.

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA (RBI) RELEASED ITS ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019-20

Key Highlights of report:

- **Government consumption will continue to support current economic demand**, while private consumption will likely lead the recovery when it takes hold after the COVID-19 outbreak eases.
- **RBI expects GDP growth to remain negative** this fiscal.
- **Sharp cut in corporate tax rate did not help** in restarting the investment cycle as intended, but has been used by companies to reduce debt and build up cash balances.
- **Total cases of frauds (involving ₹1 lakh and above) reported by banks and financial institutions increased by 28% in volume and 159% by value during 2019-20.**
- **Decline in number of counterfeit currency notes** detected in 2019-20 compared to 2018-19.

RBI'S REFORM PROPOSALS

- Monetise assets** in steel, coal, power, land, railways
- Privatise major ports**
- Set up GST Council-like authorities** to drive structural reforms in land, labour and power
- Speed up implementation** of national infrastructure pipeline
- Encourage States** to publicise availability of litigation-free land
- Incentivise production** of solar panels
- Connect dispersed transmission links** with remote areas
- Encourage FDI** in railways
- Form policy** for building reserves of strategic raw materials

Suggestions

- RBI highlighted **need to find alternatives to bank finance**.
 - It said capital markets and foreign direct investment "offer opportunities to bring in investors with a relatively longer-term view that is conducive to attracting durable capital as well as embedded technology".
- **Promotion of corporate bond market**, securitisation to enhance market-based solutions to problem of stressed assets, and appropriate pricing and collection of user charges to receive priority in policy attention.

ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) has notified amendments in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) rules</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would allow companies to spend their CSR funds in R&D activities related to new vaccine, drugs and medical devices in three financial years starting from 2020-21. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It will boost India's efforts to find effective medicines and vaccines against COVID-19. • Companies Act, 2013 requires firms with a net worth of Rs 500 crore or more, or turnover of Rs 1,000 crore or more, or net profit of Rs 5 crore or more in the immediately preceding financial year, to mandatorily spend 2% of average net profit of the preceding three years on CSR.
<p>Only registered entities from China, Pakistan allowed to bid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India has notified a format for potential bidders from these nations for registration. • The bidders having beneficial ownership of up to 10% in these countries will be eligible to bid in public procurement in India, only if they are registered with the department for the promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT). • They are also required to submit application for "security clearance".
<p>Covid-19 costs global tourism \$320B in five months: UN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ International tourist arrivals fell by 300 million during the period, or 56%. ➢ Fall in revenues has led to increased poaching and habitat destruction in and around protected areas. ➢ Transport-related greenhouse gas emissions could rebound sharply if recovery is not aligned with climate goals. • Suggestions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ mitigate socio-economic impacts of crisis – particularly women's employment and economic security. ➢ Building resilience across the entire tourism sector.
<p>River Dolphins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts from India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar have come together for enhancing conservation of river Dolphins in the region. • River Dolphins, a unique species found mainly in rivers of Asia and South America, are vanishing rapidly. • Gangetic Dolphin, a River Dolphin, is the national aquatic animal of India. • IUCN status of Gangetic Dolphin: Endangered. • Recently, Prime Minister announced Project Dolphin, to work as a catalyst to increase Dolphin population.
<p>Sputnik V</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the first COVID-19 vaccine that is claimed to be developed by Russia. • Recently, Union government stated that India is talking to Russia for purchasing Sputnik V. • World Health Organization has not approved of the vaccine yet and still terms it as a vaccine 'candidate' and not a 'vaccine'.
<p>Warli Paintings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It expresses daily and social events of Warli tribe of Maharashtra. These paintings do not depict mythological characters or images of deities, but depict social life. • Images of human beings and animals, along with scenes from daily life are created in a loose rhythmic pattern. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Paintings depict scenes of human figures engaged in activities like hunting, dancing, sowing and harvesting. ➢ In Warli paintings a series of dots and dashes make one line. • Women are mainly engaged in the creation of these paintings.
<p>Narmadashankar Dave ('Narmad') (24 August 1833 –1886)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister paid tributes to Narmadashankar Dave on his 187th birth anniversary. • He was a Gujarati poet, playwright and social reformer. • He is considered to be the founder of modern Gujarati literature. • His magazine: Dandio.

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