

NEWS TODAY

CODE ON SOCIAL SECURITY (CSS) 2020

- CSS 2020 was one of the three labour law bills passed by the Parliament recently.
- **Key features**

- > Consolidates nine different central laws such as Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 etc.
- > **Extends the protection of welfare measures** to 'gig workers', 'platform workers' and 'unorganized workers'.

➤ Mandates that **Central Government should frame a scheme for the welfare of these classes of employees in relation** to life and disability cover; health and maternity benefits; old age protection; education etc.

➤ **State Governments are mandated to frame scheme for these employees in relation** to provident fund; employment injury benefit; housing; educational schemes for children; skill upgradation of workers; funeral assistance; and old age home.

- > **Definition of 'inter-state migrant worker' expanded** to include self-employed persons.

- > Empowers Central Government **to defer the application of the provisions of the Code for a period of three months** in the event of a national disaster, pandemic or endemic.

KEY DEFINITIONS

• 'Gig worker' as a person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities **outside of traditional employer-employee relationship**.

• 'Platform worker' is a person who has a work arrangement outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship in which organisations or individuals **use an online platform to access other organisations or individuals to solve specific problems** or to provide specific services or any such other activities which may be notified by the Central Government, in exchange for payment

• 'Unorganised worker' means a **home-based worker, self-employed worker or a wage worker** in the unorganised sector and includes a worker in the organised sector who is not covered by the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947

• 'inter-state migrant worker' includes a **person who has come on his own from one State and obtained employment in an establishment of another state**.

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (MoRTH) NOTIFICATION TO ALLOW USE OF H-CNG

- It is **aimed at promotion of Green fuels for automobiles in the country**. MoRTH has been notifying various alternate fuels (such as bio-CNG, Methanol, Ethanol) under Clean Fuels for transportation.

- Hydrogen enriched CNG (H-CNG) is a **blend of hydrogen and CNG**, the ideal hydrogen concentration being 18%.

> CNG is compressed natural gas.

> As **natural gas is mainly composed of methane, CNG emits less air pollutants** — carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter — than petrol or diesel.

- **Benefits of H-CNG**

> Compared to conventional CNG, use of H-CNG **can reduce emission of carbon monoxide up to 70%**.

> It is **safer than hydrogen** due to its lower energy content.

> **Usable with the existing CNG infrastructure** as no major engine modifications are required.

- **Challenges of using H-CNG:** determining optimized hydrogen/natural gas ratio, lack of storage and supply infrastructure, more expensive than CNG etc.

- **Other steps to promote green energy in automobile sector:** Inclusion of hybrid electric vehicles, CNG, electric vehicles on battery, clean diesel vehicles, and vehicles using blends of biodiesel and ethanol fuel etc.

NEW SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY (STIP) 2020 PLANS TO RATE INSTITUTIONS ON SUPPORT FOR WOMEN STAFF

- Department of Science and Technology (DST) plan is **aimed at creating more women leaders**.

- **Present scenario**

> As per the National Task Force on women in science report, **only 15% of the Indian research and development (R&D) workforce are women, while the global average is 30%**.

> Percentage of **women faculty positions in high profiles institutes like TIFR, IITs, IISc, is only 10-12%**.

> Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards, instituted in 1958 by CSIR, include **less than 20 women awardees in 62 years**.

- **Constraints faced by women:** Social conditioning (gender bias against women, early marriage etc.), Organisational practices (gender discrimination in rules and practices, glass ceiling etc.) etc.

- **Steps taken by Government**

> **KIRAN** (Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing) Scheme, by DST, to bring gender parity by inducting more women in R&D.

> **CURIE** (Consolidation of University Research for Innovation and Excellence in Women Universities), a subcomponent of KIRAN, to develop state-of-the-art infrastructure in women universities.

> **Vigyan Jyoti Scheme** to create level-playing field for meritorious girls in high school to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in higher education.

CLASHES ERUPT BETWEEN ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN OVER THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH REGION

- Nagorno-Karabakh, in South Caucasus, is **recognized internationally as Azerbaijan's territory** but has mostly Armenian population who have resisted Azerbaijani rule for more than a century.

- In 1991 the **region declared independence, and since then it has ruled itself** with Armenian support.

- Peace talks have taken place since then mediated by the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group** - a body set up in 1992 and chaired by France, Russia and the United States.

> So far no peace treaty has been signed.

- **Impact of conflict:**

> **Regional tension:** Regional powers including Russia, Turkey and Iran are invested in the South Caucasus to varying degrees. Escalation of conflict may lead to a larger regional conflict.

> **Economic Impact:** Region serves as a corridor for pipelines taking oil and gas to world markets.

➤ Azerbaijan supplies about 5% of Europe's gas and oil demands helping to reduce the EU's dependence on Russia.

> **On International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** INSTC is the ship, rail, and road route for moving freight between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.



Transcaucasia, also known as **Southern Caucasia**, is bounded on the north by Russia, on the east by the Caspian Sea, on the south by Iran and Turkey, and on the west by the Black Sea.

DEFENCE MINISTER UNVEILS DEFENCE ACQUISITION PROCEDURE (DAP) - 2020

- DAP 2020 has been aligned with vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and empowering Indian domestic industry through **Make in India** initiative with the ultimate aim of turning India into a global manufacturing hub.
- DAP will cover **all Capital Acquisitions undertaken by Ministry of Defence and Service Headquarters** both from indigenous sources and ex-import, except for medical equipment.

Key Highlights of the draft

- Reservation in Categories for Indian Vendors** for certain categories like Buy(Indian-IDDM), Make I (Govt. funded upto 70%), Make II (Industry funded) etc.
- Enhancement of Indigenous Content (IC)** (refer infographic), simple procedure for verification of IC, promoting use of indigenous military material etc.
- Leasing is introduced as a new category** for acquisition to substitute huge initial capital outlays with periodical rental payments.
- Has new chapter for procuring **equipment and platforms based on software and information and communications technology (ICT)**.
- No offset clause in procurement of defence equipment if the deal is done through** inter-government agreement, government-to-government or an ab initio single vendor.

Category	Percentage of Indigenous Content in Defence Procurement Procedure 2016	Percentage of Indigenous Content in DAP 2020
Buy (Indian-IDDM)	Min 40%	Min 50%
Buy (Indian)	Min 40%	Indigenous design – Min 50% Otherwise – Min 60%
Buy & Make (Indian)	Min 50% of Make	Min 50% of Make
Buy (Global – Manufacture in India)	-----	Min 50% of Buy plus Make
Buy (Global)	-----	Min 30% for Indian vendors

Under the offset policy, the foreign defence entities, for certain contracts are mandated to spend a certain per centage of the total contract value in India through procurement of components, transfer of technologies or setting up of research and development facilities

ALSO IN NEWS

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPC is a 6-member committee chaired by RBI Governor. Of these, three members are from RBI while three other members are nominated by the Central Government. Its main objective is to maintain the price stability and boosting up the growth rate of the country's economy. It is entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the different policy rates including, Repo Rate, Reverse Repo Rate, and Liquidity Adjustment Facility.
ESG funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESG funds factor in the environment, social responsibility and corporate governance aspects of a company during investment. Investors, especially large and institutional players such as pension funds, especially in the US and Europe, are now increasingly investing in companies that meet ESG standards. In India, the concept is new, but several big lenders have rolled out their ESG funds. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first ESG fund was launched by the State Bank of India - SBI Magnum Equity ESG Fund.
UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UMANG provides a single platform for all Indian Citizens to access pan India e-Gov services ranging from Central to Local Government bodies and other citizen centric services. It is developed by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and National e-Governance Division to drive Mobile Governance in India. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is one of the key initiatives under the Digital India program to develop a common, unified platform and mobile app to facilitate a single point of access to all government services.
Food Fortification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FSSAI is aiming to make fortification of edible oil with vitamins A, D mandatory, which will help in boosting immunity. Fortification is the addition of key vitamins and minerals such as Iron, Iodine, Zinc, Vitamins A & D to staple foods such as rice, wheat, oil, milk and salt to improve their nutritional content. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These nutrients may or may not have been originally present in the food before processing or may have been lost during processing. Food Fortification is a scientifically proven, cost-effective, scalable and sustainable global intervention that addresses the issue of micronutrient deficiencies.
Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The optical-infrared telescope that aims to study solar system bodies and star formation in external galaxies. It is Installed at Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO), Ladakh. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is named after India-born Nobel laureate Subrahmanyam Chandrasekhar. It is remotely operated using a dedicated satellite communication link from the Centre for Research & Education in Science & Technology, Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA).
Destination North East-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is an annual festival organised by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. Objective is to take the north-eastern region to other parts of the country and bringing them closer together in order to strengthen national integration. For this year, theme is The Emerging Delightful Destinations.
Shaheed Bhagat Singh (28 September, 1907 – 24th March, 1931)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1924, he became a member of Hindustan Republican Association, founded Naujawan Bharat Sabha in 1925-26 and co-founded Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), 1928. He was associated in central assembly bombing case and was tried in Lahore conspiracy case. Bhagat Singh was charged in Saunders murder case, along with Rajguru, Sukhdev. The trio was hanged on March 24, 1931. He penned 'Why am I an atheist'.

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