

NEWS TODAY

NITI AAYOG RELEASES REPORT ON EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI) 2020

- EPI aims to **assess the readiness of the states**, in terms of their export potential and their performance.
 - It intends to **identify challenges and opportunities, enhance the effectiveness of government policies and encourage a facilitative regulatory framework.**
- EPI includes 4 pillars – **Policy; Business Ecosystem; Export Ecosystem; Export Performance** and 11 sub-pillars (refer infographic).
 - States were classified geographically – **coastal, landlocked, Himalayan, and UTs/city states.**
- Currently, **70 % of India's export has been dominated by five states** – Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Other Highlights

- Importance of exports:** increase competitiveness (both domestic and globally), rapidly innovate new technology, access to larger world markets etc.
 - Economic Survey 2017-18** says improving the export competitiveness of states could also improve their wealth and standard of living, thereby minimising regional disparity
- Challenges in export promotion:** intra- and inter-regional disparities in export infrastructure; poor trade support and growth orientation among states; and poor R&D infrastructure to promote complex and unique exports.
- Suggestions:** joint development of export infrastructure; industry-academia linkages; building capacity, and transitioning to more complex and unique products depending on inherent competitive advantages of states.

HOW THEY PERFORMED

TOP 5		BOTTOM 5	
Rank	State/ UT	Rank	State/ UT
1	Gujarat (Coastal)	32	Manipur (Himalayan)
2	Maharashtra (Coastal)	33	Andaman & Nicobar (UT)
3	Tamil Nadu (Coastal)	34	Daman and Diu (UT)
4	Rajasthan (Landlocked)	35	Lakshadweep (UT)
5	Odisha (Coastal)	36	J&K (Landlocked)



BEST STATES IN...

Export diversification: Kerala	Export infrastructure: Maharashtra	Business environment: Gujarat
Growth & orientation: Mizoram	Access to finance: Tamil Nadu	Institutional framework: Maharashtra
R&D infrastructure: Puducherry	Transport connectivity: Delhi	Export promotion policy: Gujarat
Trade support: Maharashtra	Infrastructure: Arunachal Pradesh	

SEVEN DECADES AFTER INDEPENDENCE, MANY LANGUAGES IN INDIA FACE EXTINCTION THREAT

- As per data available, some **197 languages are in various stages of endangerment in India**, more than any other country in world.
- According to UNESCO, **any language that is spoken by less than 10,000 people** is potentially endangered.
 - Critically endangered languages** are those whose youngest speakers are grandparents or older.
- In India, after the 1971 census, any **language spoken by less than 10,000 people is not included** in official list of languages.
 - It resulted in a **decline in the list of languages to 108 languages in the 1971 Census**, as against 1,652 in 1961.
- Steps taken for preservation of endangered languages**
 - Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages**, to document and archive country's languages that have become endangered or likely to be endangered in near future.
 - Government provides funds to set up **centres for endangered languages in nine central universities.**
- Suggestions**
 - Mother Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education** could play a key role in preserving languages.
 - Languages should be **endorsed through innovative, cultural and entertainment** programmes.

FLASH DROUGHTS HIT NEARLY 15% RICE, MAIZE AREAS IN 1951-2018 MONSOONS

- Unlike conventional drought that propagates slowly, **flash drought is characterized by rapid onset and intensification** caused by high evapotranspiration rates due to abnormally high temperatures, winds, and high incoming solar radiation.
 - It can be **classified as agricultural droughts** due to their direct association with soil moisture and crop stress.
 - Flash droughts can be **driven by lack of precipitation** (precipitation deficit flash drought) or by **anomalously high temperature** (heatwave flash drought).
- A recent study identified **39 flash droughts during 1951-2018 and found that 82% of those occurred during monsoon** season in India.
 - Four regions** (Central North East, North East, North West and West Central) that fall in core monsoon zone, **witnessed a majority of flash droughts**, primarily caused by monsoon breaks.
 - Increased air temperature and precipitation deficit together (during breaks) cause a rapid depletion of soil moisture leading to flash drought.
 - Peninsular Region and Himalayan region experienced flash droughts during non-monsoon season** due to precipitation caused by western disturbance and northeast monsoon.
- Impact of flash drought:** reduced yields of rice and maize (monsoon season crops), increase in irrigation water demands, can indirectly influence groundwater storage etc.

ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWERS ACT (AFSPA) EXTENDED FOR SIX MONTHS IN ASSAM

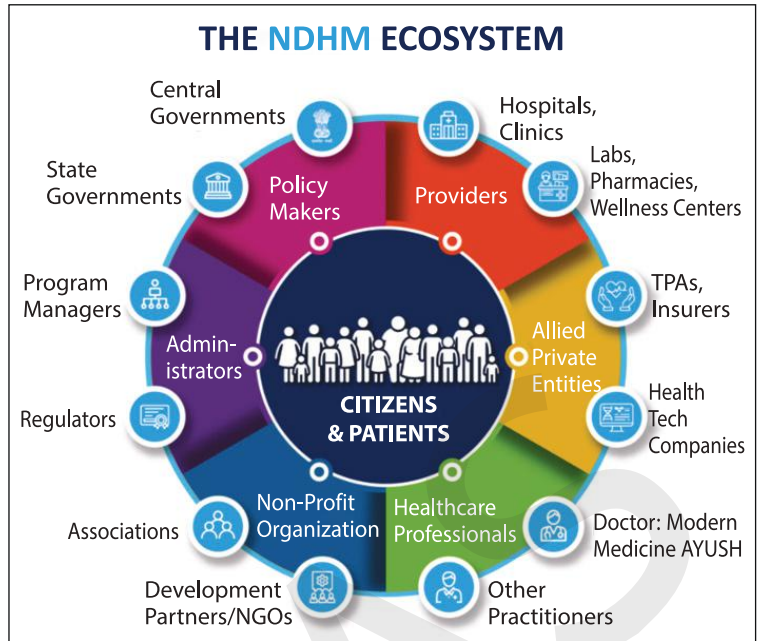
- State has been declared a "disturbed area" on account of recent insurgent attacks on security forces and recovery of illegal arms and ammunition.
 - AFSPA has been continuing in Assam since November 1990.** It is renewed every six months.

AFSPA

- Enacted in 1958, **grants extra-ordinary powers and immunity to armed forces** to bring back order in "disturbed areas".
 - Areas are considered disturbed "by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities".
- Ministry of Home Affairs would usually enforce this Act** where necessary, but there have been exceptions where Centre decided to forego its power and leave the decision to State governments.
- Some of extra-ordinary powers include**
 - Fire upon anyone after giving warning who is acting against law & order.
 - Arrest anyone without warrant.
 - Stop and search any vehicle or vessel.
 - Armed forces personnel have legal immunity for their actions.
- Presently, **AFSPA is operational in** entire States of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur (except Imphal Municipal area), parts of Arunachal Pradesh. It is also applicable in Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (NHA) RELEASES DRAFT HEALTH DATA MANAGEMENT POLICY OF NDHM

- Draft policy mainly seeks to set out a **framework for "secure processing of personal and sensitive personal data of individuals"**.
 - > NHA, attached office of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is the implementing agency of National Digital Health Mission (NDHM).
- **Key features**
 - > Those enrolled for NDHM will have **complete control over their individual personal data** and people are **free to take back the consent already given** in order to restrict any sharing of personal data linked to ID.
 - > Any **instance of unauthorised disclosure** or sharing of personal data should have to be reported promptly to relevant authorities.
 - Persons **responsible for breach** will be liable to punishment.
 - > Data collected across NDHE **will be stored in at central level, state or Union Territory level** and at health facility level, by adopting the **principle of minimality** (processing of personal data is prohibited unless it is necessary) at each point.
- NDHM, announced recently by Prime Minister, aims to develop the backbone necessary **to support integrated digital health infrastructure** of country.
 - > It will bridge the existing gap amongst different stakeholders of Healthcare ecosystem through digital highways.



ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Government to amend law for delimitation in North East states</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre seeks to amend Representation of the People Act 1950 to give legality to its earlier order setting up a Delimitation Commission for Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Nagaland. • Section 8A of the RP Act 1950 states that delimitation in these four northeast states, when held, would fall within Election Commission's remit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Hence, any delimitation exercise by new Delimitation Commission would be "declared void by the courts". • Delimitation is act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies on the basis of preceding Census.
<p>Ministry of Culture announces 7 new circles of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new circles: Trichy, Raiganj, Rajkot, Jabalpur, Jhansi, Meerut and Hampi. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Earlier there were 29 ASI circles across country. • ASI, under Ministry of Culture, is premier organization for archaeological researches and protection of cultural heritage of the nation. • It regulates archaeological activities as per provisions of Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > It also regulates Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.
<p>FASTag</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has amended National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008 to mandate FASTag for availing discount on toll plazas at National Highways. • FASTag is an electronic toll collection system, enabling automatic deduction of toll charges and lets vehicle pass through the toll plaza without stopping for the cash transaction. • It is based on radio frequency identification (RFID) technology.
<p>Digi Locker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare has decided to integrate the electronic Pension Payment Order with Digi Locker. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > It has been created with Bhavishya software, which is a single window platform for Pensioners. • DigiLocker is a flagship initiative of Ministry of Electronics & IT under Digital India programme. • DigiLocker aims at Digital Empowerment of citizen by providing access to authentic digital documents to citizen's digital document wallet.
<p>Pulikkali</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulikkali (Tiger Dance) is folk art form of Kerala. This year, it will be celebrated online due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. • Performers painted like tigers and hunters in bright yellow, red, and black dance to the beats of instruments like Udukku and Thakil. • Pulikkali was introduced by erstwhile ruler of Cochin, Maharaja Rama Varma Sakthan Thampuran, two centuries ago.

Erratum: Common eligibility test by National Recruitment Agency will be held twice a year. News today dated 20th August mentioned it once a year.

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