

NEWS TODAY

TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION FORECASTING AND ASSESSMENT COUNCIL (TIFAC) RELEASES REPORT ON ACTIVE PHARMACEUTICAL INGREDIENTS (API)

- API or bulk drug, is biologically active component of a drug product which is required to make medicines.
- Presently, **Pharmaceutical industry in India is third largest in the world and exports to more than 200 countries** in world.
- However, domestic pharmaceutical companies are **heavily dependent on imports for APIs**. Imports from China account for 68% of total imports of API.
 - **Reasons for import dependency** include low-profit margins, Cheaper imports from China, Lack of incentives to boost domestic production, Time consuming environmental clearance norms etc.
- **Key recommendations in the report:**
 - Focus on **engineering and scale aspect of technology development**.
 - Create **mega drug manufacturing clusters** with common infrastructure.
 - Government **support to R&D for pilot API development**.
 - **Encouragement of Indian companies** working in chemical segments such as steroids, amino acids, carbohydrates, nucleosides, etc.
- **Recent Initiative to boost pharmaceutical industry:** Scheme on promotion of Bulk Drug Parks; Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme etc.
- TIFAC is an autonomous organization **set up in 1988 under the Department of Science & Technology** to look ahead in technology domain, assess the technology trajectories, and support innovation.

MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (MoCA) SETS UP INVESTMENT CLEARANCE CELL (ICC) FOR AVIATION SECTOR

- MoCA has setup ICC to **serve as a single-window system for attracting investment & expedite various investment proposals** in the domestic aviation industry.
 - 10-member ICC will be headed by **Amber Dubey**, joint secretary MoCA.
 - Earlier, ICC was announced in 2020-2021 Union Budget.
- **Terms of reference of ICC**
 - **Accelerating investments, expeditious clearances**, bringing projects to the Empowered Group of Secretaries which require special incentive etc.
 - Currently, a new investor has to apply at different central departments for getting permissions like GST registration, industrial entrepreneur memorandum, import-export codes, environment clearance etc.
 - **Engage potential investors** and work with the states.
 - Adopting **ways to make states part of institutional set-up**.
 - **Identify policy and regulatory issues** that come in the way of investments.
- **Need for such move**
 - **Indian aviation sector is hit severely by the coronavirus pandemic** and economic downturn.
 - Indian aviation sector will **witness revenue losses of ₹24,000–25,000 crore**, as air travel remains suspended due to lockdown.
 - There could be **reversal in the trend growth of roughly 11% per annum**, which the industry has seen in the past ten years.

GOVERNMENT FOCUS ON DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVE OR SEND MOST MIGRANTS FOR ONE NATION, ONE RATION CARD (ONOR)

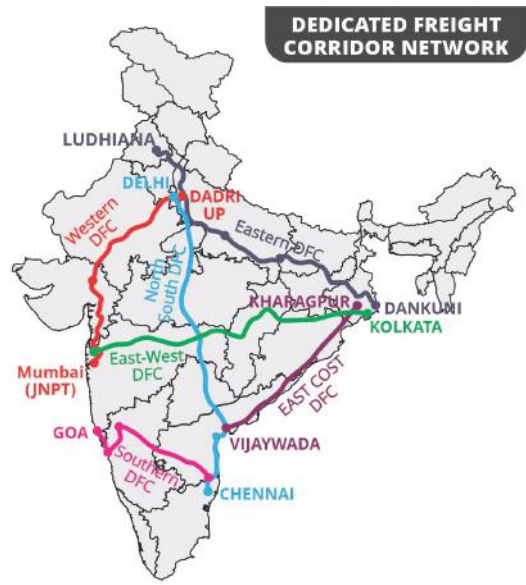
- Centre had asked States and Union Territories to share the list of the top five districts that are major recipients and major senders of migrant labourers.
 - Aim is to **expedite the implementation of ONOR** in these areas as with the lockdown restrictions relaxed, migrant labourers are gradually returning to their workplaces. This will ensure food security for them.
 - Also, earlier all states and Union Territories were asked to **operationalise the toll-free helpline number 14445** for ONOR.
- **About ONOR**
 - It aims to introduce **nation-wide ration card portability under National Food Security Act (NFSA)** to facilitate ration card holders lifting their foodgrains from any of fair price shops of their choice, without needing to obtain new ration card.
 - It is to ensure that **beneficiaries are not denied their rations because of inter-state migration**.
 - It is being implemented under **Central Sector scheme** namely **Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)**.
 - IM-PDS portal provides **the technological platform for the inter-state portability of ration cards**.
 - As of July 19, at least **20 states have joined ONORC**.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES MODALITIES FOR NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE FUND (NDRF) FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- Modalities are for receipt of contributions and grants **from any person or institution for the purpose of disaster management** in NDRF.
 - Payment can be made through **physical instruments, RTGS/NEFT/UPI and Bharatkosh portal**.
- **About NDRF**
 - Section 46 and 48 of Disaster Management Act, 2005 stipulates constitution of **NDRF at National level and State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) at State level** respectively to help people in distress during disasters.
 - **NDRF supplements SDRF of the states.**
 - In 2018, **Central Government enhanced its contribution to 90%** and all States will contribute 10% to SDRF.
 - **Disasters covered:** Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost and cold waves.
 - Also, **state government may use up to 10% of funds for local disasters** i.e. not included in notified list.
 - NDRF fund was also used to provide food and accommodation to **migrant workers during the coronavirus-induced lockdown**.
 - Centre has also **recently revised ceiling for utilisation of SDRF** from 25 to 35% to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Home ministry had decided to treat **COVID-19 as a notified disaster** for purpose of providing assistance under SDRF.

INDIAN RAILWAYS (IR) PLANS TO MONETISE ASSETS OF DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDOR (DFC) PROJECT

- IR has decided to include DFC project in its asset-monetisation programme, along with railway stations and trains to mobilise additional resources for development of railway infrastructure.
- A high-level committee has been set up which will come up with a plan to:
 - Include corporatisation of railway production units and deploying hybrid annuity model.
 - Examine asset monetisation and innovative financing methods for railway projects.
- Financial issue in IR:
 - Internal revenue generation has been declining due to a drop in the growth of both freight and passenger traffic.
 - Higher operating ratio which indicates a poorer ability to generate surplus that can be used for capital investments.
- About DFC
 - DFC is a high-speed and high-capacity railway corridor dedicated exclusively for freight (goods and commodity) movement.
 - It aims:
 - ➞ To build a corridor with appropriate technology that enables Indian railways to regain its market share of freight transport.
 - ➞ To set up Multimodal logistic parks along the DFC to provide complete transport solution to customers.
 - ➞ To support the government's initiatives toward ecological sustainability by encouraging users to adopt railways as the most environment friendly mode for their transport requirements.



ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Plea bargaining</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It refers to a person charged with a criminal offence negotiating with the prosecution for a lesser punishment than what is provided in law by pleading guilty to a less serious offence. • It was introduced in India in 2006 as part of a set of amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure. It can be initiated only by the accused. • It cannot be used in death sentence, life sentence or a prison term above seven years.
<p>3rd G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was held under Saudi Arabian Presidency through Video Conferencing. • In earlier meet, G20 Action Plan in response to COVID-19 was endorsed by members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Action plan lays out a list of collective commitments under the pillars of Health Response, Economic Response, Strong and Sustainable Recovery and International Financial Coordination, aimed at co-ordinating G20 efforts to fight the pandemic. • G20 is premier forum for international economic cooperation which brings together leaders of both developed and developing countries. India is its member.
<p>KURMA app</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a mobile-based application aimed at turtle conservation. It covers 29 species of freshwater turtles and tortoises of India. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Tortoise and freshwater turtles are among the most trafficked in the country. • It not only provides users a database to identify a species but also provides the location of the nearest rescue centre for turtles across the country. • Developed by: Indian Turtle Conservation Action Network in collaboration with Turtle Survival Alliance-India and Wildlife Conservation Society.
<p>BlackRock Android malware</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a new malware which can steal information like passwords and credit card information from about 377 smartphone applications, including Amazon, Facebook, Gmail etc. • Malware is the collective name for a number of malicious software variants, including viruses, ransomware and spyware.
<p>Solar Orbiter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an international collaboration between the European Space Agency and NASA, to study the Sun. • It was launched in February 2020, and completed its first close pass of the Sun in mid-June. • It is the nearest probe with sensors facing Sun (77 million kms away from Sun) and the closest with cameras that can capture our closest star at extreme proximity. • Recently, first images from Solar Orbiter have revealed omnipresent miniature solar flares, dubbed 'campfires', near the surface of sun.
<p>COVID-19 case fatality rate (CFR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India's CFR has for the first time dropped below 2.5%. At 2.49 per cent, India's CFR is 1.78 percentage points lower than the global average. • CFR refers to the proportion of people who die from a specified disease among all individuals diagnosed with the disease over a certain period of time.
<p>Malabar exercise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India is planning to include Australia in the Malabar exercises. • Malabar began as a bilateral naval exercise between India and the U.S. in 1992, and was expanded into a trilateral format with the inclusion of Japan in 2015. • These 4 countries are part of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (also called Quad), an informal strategic forum.

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