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### 1. Union Cabinet approved PM-PRANAM scheme ( June 29, 2023 )

Union-Cabinet-approved-PM-PRANAM-scheme

The **Union Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** on 28 June approved the **PM-PRANAM Scheme**.

#### An overview of the news

- The scheme is aimed at incentivising states to use **alternative, non-chemical fertilisers**.
- The cabinet also decided to continue the current urea subsidy for three years starting FY23, with an outlay of **Rs 3.68 trillion**.

#### About PM-PRANAM Scheme

- The full name of PM PRANAM is **Promotion of Alternative Nutrients for Agriculture Management Scheme**.
- **Aim of the Scheme :**
- to **reduce the use of chemical fertilisers**
- Reducing the subsidy burden on chemical fertilisers, which is projected to reach **Rs 2.25 lakh crore in 2022-23 - 39 per cent** more than last year's figure of **Rs 1.62 lakh crore**.
- **70 percent** of the grant provided under the scheme can be used for asset creation related to technology adoption of alternative fertilizers and alternative fertilizer production units at village, block and district level.

#### Introduction of sulphur-coated urea (Urea Gold)

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has made a significant decision to introduce **sulphur-coated urea, also known as Urea Gold, in the country**.
- This move aims to address the issue of **sulphur deficiency in the soil**.
- Sulphur-coated urea offers a more **economical and efficient solution** compared to other types of urea available in the market.
- It provides a **higher nitrogen absorption rate**, leading to **better crop productivity**.
- Conventional urea typically has a **nitrogen absorption rate of around 30%**.
- Neem-coated urea, which is another alternative, offers a higher absorption rate of **50%**.

### 2. Union Cabinet approves highest ever Fair and Remunerative Price for Sugarcane Farmers ( June 29, 2023 )

Price-for-Sugarcane-Farmers

The **Union Cabinet** on 28th June has **approved** a **fair and remunerative price of 315 rupees per quintal** for **sugarcane farmers for the season 2023-24**.

### **An overview of the news**

- This decision is aimed at benefiting **five crore sugarcane farmers and their dependents**, as well as five lakh workers employed in the sugar mills and related ancillary activities.
- It is important to note that this price is the highest ever offered to sugarcane farmers, demonstrating the government's commitment to supporting the agricultural sector.

### **National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023**

- The government has decided to introduce the **NRF Bill, 2023**, which aims to **strengthen the research ecosystem in the country**.
- The Union Cabinet has approved this bill, which will establish the NRF as an **apex body responsible for seeding, growing, and promoting research and development**.
- The bill intends to foster a culture of research and innovation throughout **India's universities, colleges, and research institutions**.

### **Objectives of NRF**

- The NRF will provide **high-level strategic direction for scientific research in India**.
- Over the next five years, the NRF is expected to receive a total estimated cost of 50 thousand crore rupees.
- By repealing the **Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) established in 2008**, the NRF will take on an expanded mandate, covering activities beyond those of SERB.
- This will enable the NRF to forge collaborations among **industry, academia, government departments, and research institutions**.

### **Collaboration and Participation**

- The NRF will create an interface mechanism to facilitate the participation and contribution of industries, state governments, scientific ministries, and line ministries in research activities.
- By encouraging collaboration between different stakeholders, such as **industry, academia, and government**, the **NRF** aims to enhance the impact of scientific research and promote innovation.

### 3. Center extends financial incentives to 12 states to accelerate power sector reforms ( June 28, 2023 )

#### 12-states-to-accelerate-power-sector-reforms

**Centre** has provided **financial incentives to 12 states** to accelerate **power sector reforms**. These states will receive over **66 thousand crore rupees** incentives for reforms in the power sector.

#### An overview of the news

- This initiative aims to support and motivate states in implementing reforms that enhance the efficiency and performance of the power sector.
- The announcement regarding this initiative was made in the **Union Budget 2021-22** by the Union Finance Minister.
- As part of the initiative, states are granted an additional borrowing space of up to **0.5 percent of their Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)** annually for a period of four years, from **2021-22 to 2024-25**.
- Based on the recommendations of the **Ministry of Power, the Ministry of Finance** has granted permission for the reforms undertaken by **12 state governments** in the years **2021-22 and 2022-23**.
- As a result, these states have been allowed to raise financial resources of **Rs 66,413 crore** through the additional borrowing permissions over the past two financial years.

#### Each State as an incentive to embark on the reform process is as follows:

SL No.	State	Cumulative amount (Rs in crore)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	9,574
2.	Assam	4,359
3.	Himachal Pradesh	251
4.	Kerala	8,323
5.	Manipur	180
6.	Meghalaya	192
7.	Odisha	2,725
8.	Rajasthan	11,308

9.	Sikkim	361
10.	Tamil Nadu	7,054
11.	Uttar Pradesh	6,823
12.	West Bengal	15,263
	Total	66,413

#### **4. MSME Ministry launches 'CHAMPIONS 2.0 Portal', 'Mobile App' and 'MSME Idea Hackathon 3.0' ( June 28, 2023 )**

CHAMPIONS-2.0-Portal

The **Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME)** celebrated '**Udyami Bharat-MSME Day**' on **International MSME Day (27th June)**.

##### **An overview of the news**

- The event was attended by **Narayan Rane**, the Union Minister for MSME, as the Chief Guest, and **Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma**, the Union Minister of State for MSME, as the Guest of Honor.
- The occasion marked the launch of various initiatives by the Ministry of MSME to support the growth and development of MSMEs.
- These initiatives included the '**CHAMPIONS 2.0 Portal**' and the '**Mobile App for Geo-tagging of Cluster Projects and Technology Centers**', which were launched by the Chief Guest and Guest of Honor.
- The results for the '**MSME Idea Hackathon 2.0**' were announced, and the launch of '**MSME Idea Hackathon 3.0**' specifically for **women entrepreneurs took place**.
- During the event, both Union Ministers presented certificates to **Gold and Silver ZED-certified MSMEs**, motivating and recognizing their achievements.
- Additionally, a digital release of a subsidy worth **400 crore rupees** was made to **10,075 beneficiaries** of the new Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) units.

##### **Significance of MSMEs in India's GDP**

- Narayan Rane highlighted the significance of MSMEs in India's GDP and exports.
- He expressed his hope that MSMEs would contribute to **50% of the country's GDP by 2030**.
- He congratulated all stakeholders and encouraged them to work towards making India a **USD 5 trillion economy**.

- Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma acknowledged the role of Indian MSMEs in the growth of the country's economy.
- He mentioned that **since 2014**, India's GDP ranking has significantly improved, moving from the **10th position to the 5th position**.

## **5. Sarbananda Sonowal launches New CSR guidelines 'Sagar Samajik Sahayog' ( June 28, 2023 )**

Sagar-Samajik-Sahayog

The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, **Sarbananda Sonowal**, has introduced a set of **new corporate social responsibility (CSR) guidelines** called '**Sagar Samajik Sahayog**' by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways.

### **An overview of the news**

- The purpose of these guidelines is to enable ports to effectively address local community issues in a collaborative and efficient manner.

### **CSR funding guidelines**

- Under the new CSR guidelines, ports in India will allocate a specific percentage of their net annual profit towards CSR activities.
- The allocation will be based on the turnover of each port for the year.
- Ports with an annual turnover of less than **Rs 100 crores** will allocate **3-5% of their net annual profit** towards CSR initiatives.
- Ports with a turnover between **Rs 100 to 500 crores** will allocate **2-3% of their net annual profit** for CSR activities.
- Ports with a turnover exceeding **Rs 500 crores** will allocate **0.5-2% of their net annual profit** towards CSR initiatives.
- Additionally, **two percent** of the total CSR expenses will be dedicated to project monitoring by the ports.
- This allocation ensures effective implementation and monitoring of the respective CSR projects undertaken by the ports.
- **20% of CSR expenses must be earmarked to Sainik Kalyan Board** at district level, National Maritime Heritage Complex and National Youth Development Fund.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

- Under CSR, companies integrate social and environmental concerns with their business partners with their stakeholders.
- It is regulated under **Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013**.
- India is the first country in the world to make CSR mandatory.

- The provision of CSR is applicable to companies whose net worth is **more than ₹ 500 crores or turnover is more than ₹ 1000 crores** or net profit is **more than ₹ 5 crores**.
- Certain categories of profitable companies are required to spend at least two per cent of their annual average net profit for three years on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

### **CSR Activities**

- Promotion of education
- Gender equality and women empowerment
- Eradication of poverty and hunger
- Preparing to fight HIV and other diseases
- Ensuring environmental balance
- Improvement in infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate in the country.
- Contribution to Prime Minister's National Relief Fund
- Promoting sports, Slum area development etc.

### **6. CCI approves acquisition of TCNS Clothing by Aditya Birla Fashion ( June 28, 2023 )**

The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** on 27th June **approved the acquisition of TCNS Clothing Co Limited by Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Limited.**

#### **An overview of the news**

- ABFRL is a listed company and a part of the **Aditya Birla group of companies**.
- It operates in the retail industry, specifically in the **apparel, footwear, and accessories segments**.
- The company sells branded products through various channels, including **retail stores, online platforms, and e-commerce marketplaces**.
- TCNS Clothing is another listed company that specializes in the **manufacturing, distribution, and sale of women's apparel, jewelry, footwear, and beauty products**.
- It owns several brands such as **W, Aurelia, Wishful, Elleven, and Folk Song**.
- In May of the current year, ABFRL announced its plan to acquire a **51% stake in TCNS Clothing**.
- The deal involved a combination of cash and equity and valued the promoter stake at approximately Rs 1,650 crore.

- ABFRL reported a loss of **Rs 186.94 crore** in the fiscal fourth quarter of FY 2022-23,
- compared to a profit of **Rs 43.59 crore** in the same quarter of the previous year.

### **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is the **chief national competition regulator in India.**
- It was set up under the **Competition Act, 2002**
- It comes under the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs.**
- It promotes healthy market competition and prevents activities that have an adverse effect on competition in India.
- CCI also approves combinations under the act so that two merging entities do not overtake the market.
- Headquarter - **New Delhi**
- Current Chairman - **Ravneet Kaur**

### **7. Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare signed a MOU with Pixxel Space India Pvt Limited ( June 27, 2023 )**

The **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with **Pixxel Space India Pvt Limited.**

#### **An overview of the news**

- The MOU aims to develop various **geospatial solutions for the Indian Agriculture Ecosystem** using **Pixxel's hyperspectral dataset.**
- The project focuses on utilizing **Pixxel's pathfinder satellites' hyperspectral data** to develop analytics models for crop mapping, crop stage discrimination, crop health monitoring, and soil organic carbon assessments.
- The collaboration will enable the Government to leverage **hyperspectral data** provided by Pixxel for developing use cases and implementing suitable methodologies.
- The adoption of new technology will reduce dependence on manual surveys and measurements, which are time-consuming and prone to errors.
- The collaboration is expected to benefit millions of farmers by providing improved crop risk management solutions and strengthening the current advisory system of the Government.

#### **Hyperspectral remote sensing technology**

- Hyperspectral remote sensing technology, which involves **spectral measurements in narrow wavelength bands by satellites**, offers unique capabilities for monitoring agriculture.

- The application of hyperspectral data includes **crop health monitoring, early detection of crop stress, accurate diagnostics of crop stress** due to pests/diseases or water, and soil nutrient mapping, particularly soil organic carbon assessments.
- The collaboration with a young startup like Pixxel will help in developing innovative geospatial solutions using advanced satellite imaging technology.

## **8. REC to provide ₹3,045 cr finance to Bangalore Metro ( June 26, 2023 )**

### **REC-to-provide-₹3,045-cr-finance-to-Bangalore-Metro**

**REC Limited**, a Public Sector Enterprise under the **Union Ministry of Power**, has announced its decision to provide **financial assistance of Rs 3,045 crore** to **Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL)** for the **Phase-II project of Bangalore Metro**.

### **An overview of the news**

- The assistance was approved by the REC Board during a meeting. The Ministry of Power released a statement confirming the extension of financial support to BMRCL.

### **Phase-II project of Namma Metro**

- The Phase-II project of Namma Metro includes the extension of the existing **East-West Corridor and North-South Corridor of Phase-I**, as well as the addition of **two new lines: RV Road to Bommasandra and Kalena Agrahara to Nagawara**.
- These new metro lines will help alleviate traffic congestion in high-traffic areas of Bangalore.
- Upon completion of Phase-II, the Namma Metro network will cover a total distance of **114.39 km and have 101 stations**.

### **About REC Limited**

- REC Limited, as a **non-banking financial company (NBFC)** focused on power sector financing and development, is expanding its involvement in funding infrastructure development by providing financial assistance to BMRCL.
- REC Ltd offers financial support for various types of projects in the power sector, including **generation, transmission, distribution, and renewable energy**.
- In its fiscal fourth quarter results, REC reported a consolidated **net profit of Rs 3,065.37 crore** for the quarter ending March 2023, marking a **33% increase** compared to the same quarter last year.
- The company's total revenue from operations stood at **Rs 10,243.06 crore**, reflecting a **6.3% growth** compared to the previous year's corresponding period.
- Total expenses for the quarter were **Rs 6,353.40 crore**, a decrease of **6.5% compared to the previous year**.



## **9. Asian Development Bank to provide 400 million US dollars in loans to Bangladesh ( June 26, 2023 )**

Asian-Development-Bank-to-provide-400-million-US-dollars

The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has signed a **loan agreement** with the government of **Bangladesh** to provide **\$400 million** for the construction of a dual gauge railway between **Chattogram and Cox's Bazar**.

### **An overview of the news**

- The purpose of the railway project is to **promote trade, investment, and tourism in Bangladesh**.
- The new rail link is expected to open this year and aims to transport approximately **2.9 million passengers** annually between Chattogram and Cox's Bazar by 2024.
- The ADB is supporting the government's shift from road to rail transport, as rail is considered a **climate-friendly, safe, affordable, and efficient mode of transportation**.

### **Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Railway**

- The Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Railway is part of the **Trans-Asia Railway (TAR) network**, which is an initiative led by the **United Nations**.
- The TAR network aims to establish seamless rail links between Asia and Europe to enhance **connectivity between people and markets**.
- The TAR network covers a total of **128,000 kilometers** and passes through **28 countries**.
- It was formalized through an Inter-governmental Agreement on **Trans-Asian Railway network in 2009**.
- The assistance provided by ADB for the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Railway Project is the third part of a \$1.5 billion loan package for the **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) initiative**.

### **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

- It is a **regional multilateral financial institution** which focuses on the countries of **Asia and Pacific region**.
- It was set up after a resolution was passed at the first Ministerial Conference on Asian Economic Cooperation held by the United Nations Economic Commission for **Asia and the Far East in 1963**.
- It started functioning from **19 December 1966 with 31 member countries**.
- At present it has **68 members**—of which **49 members are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside**.

- **Japan is the largest shareholder** of the ADB and a Japanese has always been the head of the ADB.
- President of ADB: **Masatsugu Asakawa**
- Headquarters: **Mandaluyong City, Manila, Philippines**

## **10. US agrees to provide market access to India's steel and aluminum products ( June 24, 2023 )**

US-agrees-to-provide-market-access

The **United States** on 23 June has **agreed to grant market access to India's steel and aluminium products**, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

### **An overview of the news**

- As per the agreement, the US Department of Commerce will clear **70 percent of steel and 80 percent of aluminium applications** for products originating in India.
- The decision was made during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States.
- The **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** expects this agreement to **boost India's steel and aluminium exports by approximately 35 percent**.
- The **US had restricted market access for Indian steel and aluminium products since June 14, 2018**, under the exclusion process of Section 232 of the **Trade Expansion Act 1962**.
- Under this restriction, additional duties of **25 percent and 10 percent** were imposed on steel and aluminium products, respectively.
- In response, India had implemented retaliatory tariffs on certain products, which it has now agreed to remove.
- However, the **basic import duties applicable** to all imports of steel and aluminium products will continue.