

July - 14

TNPSC BITS

- ❖ Union Government has invited United States President Donald Trump to be the chief guest at 2019 Republic Day celebrations. If President Trump accepts the invitation, he will be second serving US President after Barack Obama to be invited as chief guest of Republic Day Parade.

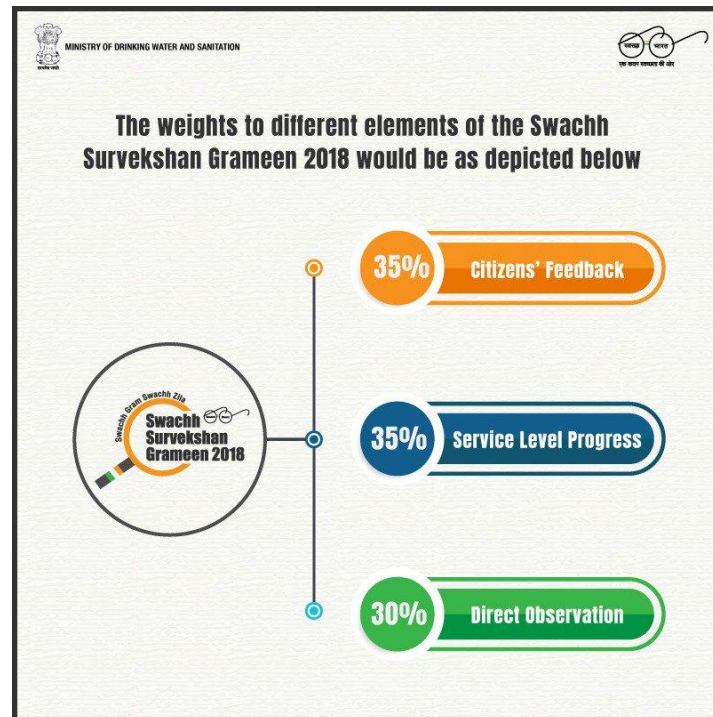
NATIONAL

Task force Constituted to reduce import

- ❖ The government has set up a high-level task force under the **chairmanship** of **Cabinet Secretary P K Sinha** to identify various items and policy interventions to reduce dependence on import.
- ❖ It will suggest ways to cut import of those items which can be manufactured or explored in the country.
- ❖ The task force includes secretaries from Departments of Commerce, Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Revenue, Skill Development, Defence Production, Petroleum, Steel, Electronics and Telecommunications.
- ❖ On an average, India's imports stand at around US \$450 billion per year.
- ❖ In financial year 2017-18, the inbound shipments grew about 20% to US \$460 billion.

Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018

- ❖ Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) has launched Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 (SSG 2018) in New Delhi.
- ❖ The objective of SSG 2018 is to undertake ranking of states and districts on basis of their performance attained on key quantitative and qualitative Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) parameters.
- ❖ The criteria of SSG-2018 include survey of public places, citizens' perspective of cleanliness, their recommendations and data from SBM-G.



- ❖ The SSG 2018 will be conducted by independent survey agency in all districts from 1st to 31st August 2018.

K Kasturirangan Committee

- ❖ The K Kasturirangan Committee tasked with drafting a new education policy has got third extension from the HRD Ministry to give final shape to the draft.

New National Education Policy

The HRD ministry has constituted a new nine-member panel headed by space scientist K Kasturirangan to frame a new National Education Policy (NEP). The other members of the panel include chosen experts and educationists from wide-ranging backgrounds.

Background

In 2015, Narendra Modi Government had set up a committee under former Cabinet Secretary TSR Subramanian to chalk out a new education policy. This committee had submitted its report in May 2016. The committee had presented its report in two volumes with around 90 suggestions.

- ❖ The report which was supposed to be submitted by June 30, now has time till August 31.
- ❖ The existing National Education Policy was framed in 1986 and revised in 1992.
- ❖ Apart from Kasturirangan, the committee has eight members, including mathematician Manjul Bhargava.
- ❖ The panel will also take into account the report of a panel headed by former cabinet secretary TSR Subramanian, formed by the HRD ministry during the tenure of Smriti Irani.

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Report

- ❖ According to the 2017-18 report of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), 54,723 children were kidnapped in 2016, but charge sheets were filed in only 40.4 per cent of the cases.
- ❖ In the year 2015, 41,893 such cases were registered, while in 2014 this number was 37,854.
- ❖ It is revealed in the report of the Ministry that 8132 cases of human trafficking were registered in the country in 2016.
- ❖ In the year 2016, the conviction rates were 22.7 percent in cases of child abduction. Figures for the year 2017 have not been submitted yet.
- ❖ The report of the Home Ministry says that cases of crime against 1,06,958 children were registered in the country in 2016.
- ❖ Whereas in 2015 it was 94,172. In this way, an increase of 13.6 percent was seen.

INTERNATIONAL

Panel on digital cooperation to tackle cybersecurity threats

- ❖ United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres has established first-of-its-kind panel on digital cooperation aimed at addressing concerns of cybersecurity threats and rise in hate speech.
- ❖ The high-level panel on digital cooperation will be co-chaired by US philanthropist Melinda Gates and China-based Alibaba founder Jack Ma.
- ❖ The panel will have 20 members in total and include leaders from technology, public policy, science and academia etc.

- ❖ Senior Indian diplomat Amandeep Singh Gill along with former diplomat Jovan Kurbalija will be executive directors of panel's secretariat.

BRICS Education Ministers Meeting 2018

- ❖ The 6th edition of BRICS Education Ministers' Meeting-2017 was held at Cape Town, South Africa.
- ❖ It was Hosted by the Department of Higher Education and Training,
- ❖ The theme for this year's meeting was, "Deepening BRICS Education Partnerships and Exchanges".
- ❖ India has been allotted with the key theme of 'Digitisation in Education' at the meeting.

UAE extends compulsory military service

- ❖ The United Arab Emirates has extended compulsory military service for Emirati men from 12 to 16 months.
- ❖ Men who hold a high school diploma or its equivalent will serve 16 months instead of 12.
- ❖ While those who do not have a high school qualification continue to serve for two years.
- ❖ It kept participation for women, who can serve only for nine months, optional and requiring approval of their legal guardians.
- ❖ The UAE introduced mandatory military service in 2014 for Emirati men.
- ❖ The UAE is a key member of a Saudi-led military coalition that intervened in Yemen in 2015 against the Iran-aligned Houthi movement to restore the internationally recognised Yemeni government in exile.

ECONOMY

Hike in minimum support price (MSP)

- ❖ The Centre gave approval for an increase in minimum support price (MSP) for 14 kharif crops with a price hike ranging from 4 to 53 percent.
- ❖ To define input cost, the standard A2+FL was considered, which means actual cost plus imputed value of family labour in the production of a crop.

- ❖ A total of 26 crops are covered under MSP (fair remunerative price in the case of sugarcane).
- ❖ This includes:
 - copra, de-husked coconut, raw cotton, raw jute, sugarcane and Virginia flue cured tobacco.

7 cereals	5 pulses	8 oilseeds
paddy	gram	groundnut
jowar	arhar/tur	rapeseed/mustard
wheat	moong	toria
barley	urad	soyabean
bajra	lentil	sunflower seed
maize		safflower seed and niger seed
ragi		sesamum

- ❖ Government's decision to hike MSP for kharif crops is expected to impact GDP by 0.1-0.2 per cent besides adding to inflationary pressures.

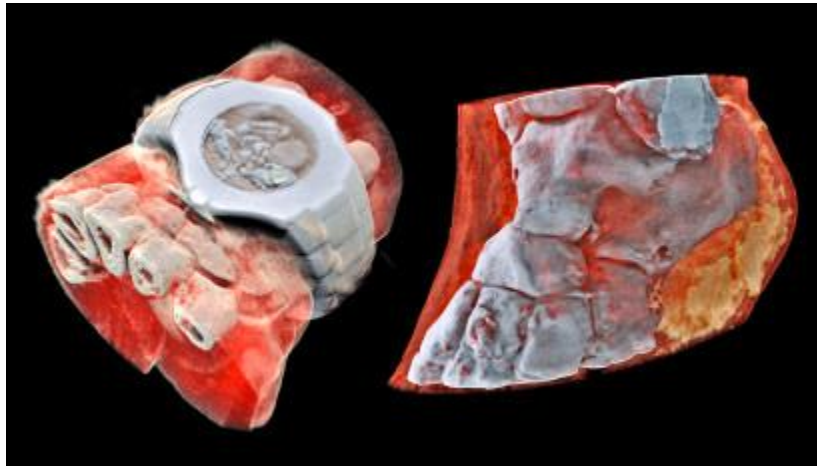
Crop (per quintal)	Last year's MSP	Approved MSP	change
Ragi	1900	2897	52.5%
Nigerseed	4050	5877	45.1%
Jowar (hybrid)	1700	2430	42.9%
Jowar (malandi)	1725	2450	42.0%
Bajra	1425	1950	36.8%
Sunflower seed	4100	5388	31.4%
Cotton (medium)	4020	5150	28.1%
Cotton (long)	4320	5450	26.2%
Moong	5575	6975	25.1%
Maize	1425	1700	19.3%
Sesamum	5300	6249	17.9%
Paddy (common)	1550	1750	12.9%
Paddy (grade A)	1590	1770	11.3%
Soyabean	3050	3399	11.4%
Groundnut	4450	4890	9.9%
Tur (arhar)	5450	5675	4.1%
Urad	5400	5600	3.7%

- ❖ Economists expect the food inflation to increase by 50-90bps by FY19E.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

World's first 3D, colour X-ray on human body

- ❖ Scientists from New Zealand have performed world's first-ever 3-D, colour X-ray on human. It has potential to improve the field of medical diagnostics.
- ❖ The new device is based on the traditional black-and-white X-ray.



- ❖ But it incorporates particle-tracking technology called Medipix developed by European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN).
- ❖ Medipix, works like a camera detecting and counting individual sub-atomic particles as they collide with pixels while its shutter is open.
- ❖ This allows for high-resolution, high-contrast pictures.
- ❖ The technology is being commercialised by New Zealand company MARS Bioimaging.

ENVIRONMENT

Threatening climate change to the Nilgiri tahr

- ❖ According to recent study published international journal Ecological Engineering, climate change is threatening the Nilgiri tahr.
- ❖ It is estimated that endangered wild goat could lose approximately 60% of its habitat, starting from 2030s.

- ❖ There are only around 2,500 Nilgiri Tahrs left in the wild and their population is small and isolated. It makes them vulnerable to local extinction.
- ❖ It is state animal of Tamil Nadu. It is endemic to Western Ghats from the Nilgiris to Kanyakumari.
- ❖ It is confined to a narrow belt of higher elevation (altitudes) of Shola Forests in Western Ghats.
- ❖ **IUCN in its red data book** has classified it as **Endangered** (number fewer than 2,500 mature individuals).
- ❖ Besides it is protected species under **Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act** of 1972.

STATES

'Underperforming' employees above 50 to retire

- ❖ The Uttar Pradesh government is contemplating "compulsory retirement" for employees aged 50 years and above if they are found neglecting their duty.
 - ❖ The Government ordered that Employees who have completed 50 years by this date will be considered for screening.
 - ❖ The exercise was aimed at giving voluntary retirement to those who were found corrupt or non-performing.
 - ❖ However, none of them was forced to retire despite a list being submitted to the government.
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