



# Daily Current Affairs

Posted at: 29/01/2019

## **National Agricultural Higher Education Project**

### **Why in news?**

Recently Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare spoke about National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) to attract talent and strengthen higher agricultural education in the country.

### **About National Agricultural Higher Education Project:**

- The National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) is formulated by ICAR with a total cost of Rs 1100 crores for four years starting from 2017-18.
- The project is proposed on a 50:50 cost sharing basis between the World Bank and the GoI, implemented at the Education Division, ICAR, New Delhi.
- NAHEP has been conceived to enable the agricultural education system catch up nationally and internationally with the peers, investing on infrastructure, competency and commitment of faculty, and attracting talented students to agriculture.
- It has been formulated with a focus to improve and sustain quality of higher agricultural education.
- The project aims to support infrastructure, faculty and student advancement, and providing means for better governance and management of agricultural universities, to raise the standard of current agricultural education system and provide a more jobs and entrepreneurship orientation to agricultural education.

## **Project Objectives:**

- Accentuate the relevance and quality of higher agricultural education in selected AUs
- Student and faculty development
- Improve learning outcomes, employability and entrepreneurship; and
- Enhancing institutional and system management effectiveness.

There are three components to the project.

**First** component is support to agricultural universities. This component will finance investments by participating AUs to improve the quality and relevance of agricultural education and research toward agricultural transformation.

**Second** component-Investments in ICAR for Leadership in Agricultural Higher Education. Third component-Project Management and Learning.

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- The scheme is aimed to generate quality human resources from the institutions of higher agricultural education. It encompasses several new initiatives including, steps to attract talented students, reducing academic inbreeding and addressing faculty shortage.
- It will also take care of green initiatives, mitigating faculty shortage, international ranking, alumni involvement, promoting innovations, inspired teacher network, reducing inbreeding, academia interface, technology enabled learning, Post-doctoral Fellowships, Agriculture Education Portal, Scientific Social responsibility etc. for quality assurance ranking of the agricultural universities has been linked to the financial support under the scheme along with accreditation.
- Support for strengthening and modernization of infrastructure related to student and faculty amenities and capacity building of both faculty and students in cutting edge areas through Niche Area of Excellence programme will improve teaching and encouraging holistic development of the students.
- This will lead to generation of competitive and confident human resource. In addition, research on gender issues in agriculture and allied fields, formulating gender-equitable agricultural,

policies/programmes and gender-sensitive agricultural-sector responses will be undertaken by ICAR-CIWA and capacity building needs of the human resources and stakeholders of the entire National Agricultural Research & Education System (NARES) will be catered leading to enhancing of competencies and capacities of the stakeholders including farmers, young scientists, students and agri-industry in NARES by ICAR-NAARM.

### **Background:**

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) undertakes planning, development, coordination and quality assurance in higher agricultural education through partnership with 75 Agricultural Universities (AUs) established across the country.
  - The human resource developed by Agricultural Universities has played a pivotal role in transforming agricultural scenario to achieve self-sufficiency.
  - The approach is multipronged, addressing the issues of competence enhancement, attracting and retaining talented youth to agriculture education and to improve the overall infrastructure in terms of student and faculty amenities pertaining to teaching and learning.
  - The National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM) has played a key role in enhancing the capacities of individuals and institutions of National Agricultural Research and Education System (NARES) in agricultural research, education and technology management.
  - The Central Institute for Women in Agriculture has been providing a leadership role in empowering farm women as in the changing agricultural scenario the roles and responsibilities of women in agriculture are indispensable.
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### **Common Services Centres (CSCs)**

#### **Why in news?**

In its endeavor to promote rural marketing and create employment, CSC has launched its first Cash and Carry store in *Kanth Tehsil of Moradabad district, Uttar Pradesh*.

### **Highlights:**

- Common Services Centres (CSCs) under Digital India mission are providing Citizen Centric Services. CSCs are delivering many government and non-government services to citizens in rural India across the country.
- They have also launched many products: like Patanjali, i-Ball, Samsung and signed agreement with many service providers.
- Common Services Centres (CSCs) are also selling IFFCO fertilizers and seeds through its vast network in the country.
- Each cash and carry store will provide employment minimum 4 persons directly and indirectly. Clubbed with economic census initiative, stage has been set to create 25 lakh job opportunities in the near future in under-exposed parts of India.

### **About Common Services Centres:**

- Common Services Centre (CSC) programme is an initiative of the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY), Government of India.
- CSCs are the access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, thereby contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.
- CSCs are more than service delivery points in rural India. They are positioned as change agents, promoting rural entrepreneurship and building rural capacities and livelihoods.
- They are enablers of community participation and collective action for engendering social change through a bottom-up approach with key focus on the rural citizen.
- CSC e-Governance Services India Limited is a Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC SPV) incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, to monitor the implementation of the Common

Services Centers Scheme.

- It provides a centralized collaborative framework for delivery of services to citizens through CSCs, besides ensuring systemic viability and sustainability of the scheme.

## **Common Service Centres and Digital India**

- Digital India is a flagship programme of the Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- CSCs enable the three vision areas of the Digital India programme:
  - Digital infrastructure as Utility to Every Citizen
  - Governance and services on demand
  - Digital empowerment of citizens

## **Partners**

- Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) to provide service to the rural consumer in villages.
- The agency designated by the State - State Designated Agency (SDA)—to facilitate implementation of the Scheme within the State.
- Others include central ministries, their departments and other central agencies to offer various services to the citizens and partner banks (public and private sector) and regional rural banks to enable CSCs to become Banking Correspondent Agents / Customer Service Points to deliver various banking and financial services.

## **Services offered**

- The CSCs would provide high quality and cost-effective video, voice and data content and services, in the areas of e-governance, education, health, telemedicine, entertainment as well as other private services.
- A highlight of the CSCs is that it will offer web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas, including application forms, certificates, and utility payments such as electricity, telephone and water bills.

- In addition to the universe of G2C services, a wide variety of content and services that are offered are:
  1. Agriculture Services (Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Veterinary) Education & Training Services (School, College, Vocational Education, Employment, etc.)
  2. Health Services (Telemedicine, Health Check-ups, Medicines)
  3. Rural Banking & Insurance Services (Micro-credit, Loans, Insurance)
  4. Entertainment Services (Movies, Television)
  5. Utility Services (Bill Payments, Online bookings)
  6. Commercial Services (DTP, Printing, Internet Browsing, Village level BPO).

## **CSC 2.0 Scheme**

- Under the Digital India programme, at least one CSC (preferably more than one) is envisaged in 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats for delivery of various electronic services to citizens across rural India.
- This would include strengthening and integrating the existing 100,000 CSCs under the CSC scheme and making operational an additional 1.5 lakh CSCs in Gram Panchayats.
- CSC 2.0 is a service delivery oriented entrepreneurship model with a large bouquet of services made available for the citizens through optimum utilization of infrastructure already created in the form of SWAN, SSDG, e-District, SDC, and NOFN/BharatNet.

## **Objectives of CSC 2.0:**

- Non-discriminatory access to e-Services for rural citizens by making CSCs complete service delivery centres, utilizing the infrastructure already created in terms of other Mission Mode Projects.
- Expansion of self-sustaining CSC network till the Gram Panchayat level – 2.5 lakh CSCs, i.e. at least one CSC per Gram Panchayat, more than one preferred.
- Empowering District e-Governance Society (DeGS) under the district administration for implementation.



- Creating and strengthening the institutional framework for rollout and project management, thereby, supporting the State and District administrative machinery and handholding of VLEs through local language Help Desk support.
  - Enablement and consolidation of online services under single technology platform, thereby making the service delivery at CSCs accountable, transparent, efficient and traceable, with a technology-driven relationship between all stakeholders.
  - Providing Centralized Technological Platform for delivery of various services in a transparent manner to the citizens.
  - Increasing sustainability of VLEs by sharing maximum commission earned through delivery of e-services and encouraging women to join as VLEs.
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### **3rd Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation**

#### **Why in news?**

Recently Two Day International Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation inaugurated in New Delhi.

#### **Highlights:**

- The conference is being hosted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in close collaboration with the Global Tiger Forum which is an International, Intergovernmental Organization for conserving tigers in the world.
- Third in a series of Stock Taking Conferences Conference on Tiger Conservation, this is the second to be held in India after 2012 and is expected to have wide ranging discussions on the status of the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) by the 13 tiger range countries besides deliberations on combating wildlife trafficking.
- During the St. Petersburg declaration in 2010, tiger range countries

had resolved to double tiger numbers across their range by 2022.

- At the time of deliberations at St. Petersburg, India's tiger estimate stood at 1411, which after the third cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation, 2014 has nearly been doubled to 2226.
- This has largely been possible because of strides made against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), predominant among them being legislation to ensure protection of tiger habitat and enhancement of penalties, besides providing a statutory basis for inviolate space.
- The fourth cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation, 2018 is currently under way.

### **About St. Petersburg declaration in 2010:**

- The International Tiger Day (also known as Global Tiger Day) is observed annually on 29 July to raise awareness for tiger conservation.
- The goal of observance of the day is to promote the protection and expansion of the wild tigers habitats and to gain support through awareness for tiger conservation.

### **Background**

- The International Tiger Day was founded in 2010 at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit. The summit had issued St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation with an aim to double the big cat population by 2022.
- The tiger is the largest of the world's big cats with its distinctive orange and black stripes and beautifully marked face.
- It has been founded that in the last century 97% of all wild tigers had disappeared, with only 3,000 left alive.
- Tigers are on the brink of extinction. Many factors have caused their numbers to fall, including habitat loss, hunting and poaching and climate change.

### **About National Tiger Conservation Authority:**



- It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is set up under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Environment and Forests.
- The Authority will have eight experts or professionals having qualifications and experience in wildlife conservation and welfare of people including tribals, apart from three Members of Parliament of whom two will be elected by the House of the People and one by the Council of States.
- The Inspector General of Forests, in charge of project Tiger, will be ex-officio Member Secretary.

### **Objective of the NTCA:**

- Providing statutory authority to Project Tiger so that compliance of its directives become legal.
- Fostering accountability of Center-State in management of Tiger Reserves, by providing a basis for MoU with States within our federal structure.
- Providing for an oversight by Parliament.
- Addressing livelihood interests of local people in areas surrounding Tiger Reserves.

### **Power and Functions of the NTCA:**

- to approve the tiger conservation plan prepared by the State Government under sub-section (3) of section 38V of this Act;
- to evaluate and assess various aspects of sustainable ecology and disallow any ecologically unsustainable land use such as, mining, industry and other projects within the tiger reserves;

- to provide for management focus and measures for addressing conflicts of men and wild animal and to emphasize on co-existence in forest areas outside the National Parks, sanctuaries or tiger reserve, in the working plan code;
  - to provide information on protection measures including future conservation plan, estimation of population of tiger and its natural prey species, status of habitats, disease surveillance, mortality survey, patrolling, reports on untoward happenings and such other management aspects as it may deem fit including future plan conservation;
  - to ensure critical support including scientific, information technology and legal support for better implementation of the tiger conservation plan;
  - to facilitate ongoing capacity building programme for skill development of officers and staff of tiger reserves.
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## **Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA)**

### **Why in news?**

Recently A Signing ceremony of Agreement between India and OECD for India's participation in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2021, in presence of Union HRD Minister was held in New Delhi.

### **Key Facts:**

- Government of India has decided that India will participate in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) to be conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2021.
- Participation in PISA 2021 would indicate the health of the education system and would motivate other schools /states in the subsequent

cycles.

- This will lead to improvement in the learning levels of the children and enhance the quality of education in the country.

### **About PISA:**

- PISA is a competency based assessment which unlike content-based assessment, measures the extent to which students have acquired key competencies that are essential for full participation in modern societies.
- It would lead to recognition and acceptability of Indian students and prepare them for the global economy in the 21st century.
- Learnings from participation in PISA will help to introduce competency based examination reforms in the school system and help move away from rote learning. The CBSE and NCERT will be part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.
- More than 80 countries, including 44 middle-income countries, have participated in the assessment since the first round of testing in 2000.
- Next round of PISA is going to be held in 2021. The list of registered countries includes Brazil, China (certain areas like Shanghai and Beijing) and countries from South-East Asia like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

### **key features of PISA:**

- PISA is a triennial international survey (every three years) which aims to evaluate the education system worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students.
- Students are assessed in reading, mathematics, science and collaborative problem-solving.
- Participation in PISA allows benchmarking performance against a wide range of countries.
- PISA uses test items aligned with international benchmarks. Test items are adapted to the local context and language, pilot tested and validated before being used for the test.
- OECD have agreed to contextualize the questions for Indian students.



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