



Daily Current Affairs

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Swadesh Darshan project

Why in news?

Union Minister for Tourism will be inaugurating the project “Development of North East Circuit: Rangpo- Rorathang- Aritar- Phadamchen- Nathang-Sherathang- Tsongmo- Gangtok-Phodong- Mangan- Lachung-Yumthang- Lachen- Thangu-Gurudongmer- Mangan- Gangtok-Tuminlingee- Singtam” implemented under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism.

Highlights:

- The development of Tourism in North Eastern Region being prime area of focus for the Ministry of Tourism, several initiatives for growth of domestic and international tourism in the region has been taken by the Ministry.
- One of the many challenges region faces in development of tourism is the absence of quality infrastructure, services and awareness about the array of tourism products region has to offer.
- On one hand the Ministry has given great impetus to the tourism infrastructure in the region under its flagship schemes of Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD.

About Swadesh Darshan scheme:

- India's rich cultural, historical, religious and natural heritage provides a huge potential for development of tourism and job creation

in the country.

- There is a great scope and need to develop tourist circuits on specific themes to attract the tourists having special interest in visiting such places.
- This can be achieved only through an integrated approach by providing engaging experiences for distinct categories of tourists i.e. Domestic and International. Various themes which are unique and specific to the area can include beaches, culture, heritage, wildlife etc.
- Such theme based tourist circuits should be developed in a manner that supports communities, provides employment and fosters social integration without comprising upon the environmental concerns and provides unique experiences to the tourists.
- Swadesh Darshan scheme is envisioned to synergise with other Government of India schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, Make in India etc. with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realise its potential.
- The duration of Swadesh Darshan Scheme is till the 14th Finance Commission Period i.e. March 2020.

Objectives:

- To position tourism as a major engine of economic growth and job creation;
- Develop circuits having tourist potential in a planned and prioritized manner;
- Promote cultural and heritage value of the country to generate livelihoods in the identified regions;
- Enhancing the tourist attractiveness in a sustainable manner by developing world class infrastructure in the circuit/destinations;
- Follow community based development and pro-poor tourism approach;
- Creating awareness among the local communities about the importance of tourism for them in terms of increased sources of income, improved living standards and overall development of the area.
- To create employment through active involvement of local

communities;

- Harness tourism potential for its effects in employment generation and economic development.
- To make full use of the potential and advantages in terms of available infrastructure, national culture and characteristic strong points of each and every region throughout the country by development of theme based circuits.
- Development of tourist facilitation services to enhance visitor experience/satisfaction.

KEY FEATURES

- The scheme was completely funded by the central government of India. There are 13 cities that are under consideration of development. These 13 cities are all pilgrimage sites.
 - There are 13 tourist circuits that are proposed and started under the scheme. Under these 13 circuits there are many cities and sites are added for the visitors to get down there and enjoy their holiday.
 - The scheme is a joint venture by the Central Government and Ministry of Tourism. By launching the scheme both the ministry will be able to develop the heritage cities of the nation and conserve them for the tourists from across the globe.
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15th Finance Commission

Why in news?

Recently The 15th Finance Commission headed by Chairman Shri N K Singh, met with over 25 representatives of various Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in its first meeting during the 3 day visit to Punjab.

About 15th Finance Commission:

- The Fifteenth Finance Commission of India is an Indian Finance

Commission constituted in November 2017 and is to give recommendations for devolution of taxes and other fiscal matters for five fiscal years, commencing 1 April 2020.

- The commission's chairman is N. K. Singh, with its full-time members being Shaktikanta Das, Ashok Lahiri and Anoop Singh. In addition, the commission also has a part-time member in Ramesh Chand.

Aim

- The commission was set up to give recommendations for devolution of taxes and other fiscal matters for five fiscal years, commencing 1 April 2020.
- The main tasks of the commission were to "strengthen cooperative federalism, improve the quality of public spending and help protect fiscal stability".
- Some newspapers like The Hindu and The Economic Times noted that commission's job was made harder because of the roll-out of goods and service tax (GST) regime in India, as, it had taken certain powers concerning taxation away from the union and the states, and, had given them to the newly formed GST Council.
- The peer-reviewed journal, Economic and Political Weekly, further noted that even after the passage of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003, some states still incur revenue deficits, so, the commission would have to either recommend the disbandment of revenue deficit grants, or, would have to recommend ways for further fiscal consolidation.
- The commission's chairman, N. K. Singh, said that the commission would need to define populism, as, the commission's terms of reference (ToR) had a provision for rewarding states which were successful in eliminating or reducing expenditure incurred on populist schemes.
- Singh added that the commission would need to reappraise the formula of devolution of revenue through the union's taxes, because of a provision in its ToR.
- Singh further said, in a lecture to Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad students, that one of the commission's challenges was to find a balance between equity and efficiency, adding that urban and rural local bodies—the constitutionally-mandated third-tier of

government in India—needed to be further empowered to stimulate added economic growth.

- Commission may need to function like the first finance commission because of an increased decentralisation and change in India; further suggesting to divide the tax devolution system into four pots - "return", "redistribution", "risk sharing" and "reward", while also saying that tax devolution was no more a north-south issue.

Functions:

The Finance Commission is required to make recommendations to the president of India on the following matters:

1. The distribution of the net proceeds of taxes to be shared between the Centre and the states, and the allocation between the states of the respective shares of such proceeds.
 2. The principles that should govern the grants-in-aid to the states by the Centre (i.e., out of the consolidated fund of India).
 3. The measures needed to augment the consolidated fund of a state to supplement the resources of the panchayats and the municipalities in the state on the basis of the recommendations made by the state finance commission.
 4. Any other matter referred to it by the president in the interests of sound finance.
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Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Why in news?

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India and National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to use new data technologies, knowledge generation and knowledge sharing, and capacity building in the field of Official Statistics.

Highlights:

The following are the key activities envisaged under the MoU:

- Business Process Review (“BPR”) of the existing official statistics system and development of an information and communication technology (“ICT”) plan for mainstreaming data integration across various domains and agencies.
 - Using technology for survey instruments and processing of data for large scale surveys and data analytics.
 - Creation of a national data warehouse to integrate administrative statistical datasets available up to the local Government level.
 - Leveraging administrative data to improve the quality and coverage of core statistics with technical support and collaboration with data producers.
 - Setting up common standards and protocols for data collection, its quality, meta-data and use across line ministries and sub-national entities.
 - Development of new ICT based framework for measurement of social and economic indicators in the emerging knowledge based economy.
 - Capacity building for statistical activities including big data analytics, technical reporting etc.
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