



# Daily Current Affairs

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## Ease of Doing Agri-Business Index

### Why in news?

Recently Minister of State for Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare provided information about Ease of Doing Agri-Business Index in Lok Sabha.

### About Ease of Doing Agri-Business Index:

- NITI Aayog launches the first ever Agricultural Marketing & Farm Friendly Reforms Index.
- NITI Aayog has identified three key areas for reform and is now persuading states to undertake the reforms. The areas identified for immediate reforms are:
  - Agricultural market reforms
  - Land lease reforms
  - Reforms related to forestry on private land – felling and transit of trees.
- Three crucial reforms pertaining to marketing in agriculture have been recommended by NITI Aayog. First is the immediate need to amend existing regulations in order to liberalize markets.
- Farmer to should be given the freedom to decide to whom, where and how he wants to sell his produce. Seven indicators have been developed by NITI in this regard.
- The reforms also suggest special treatment of fruits and vegetables from other farm produce as they are perishable and produced in small quantities.
- Importantly, the recommended reforms place importance on IT in

marketing for the creation of a 'national market' for agriculture, so that farmers across the country may benefit from interconnected markets, through the use of appropriate technology.

- This important reform has so far eluded the country due to strong lobbies of middlemen and the reluctance of political class to take favourable steps.
- NITI Aayog has launched an index to rank States and UTs that is based on implementation of seven provisions proposed under model APMC Act, joining eNAM initiative, special treatment to fruits and vegetables for marketing and level of taxes in mandis.
- These indicators reveal ease of doing agribusiness as well as opportunities for farmers to benefit from modern trade and commerce and have wider option for sale of her/his produce.
- These indicators also represent competitiveness, efficiency and transparency in agri markets. The second area of reforms included in the index is relaxation in restrictions related to lease in and lease out agricultural land and change in law to recognise tenant and safeguard land owners liberalisation.
- The third area included in the index represent freedom given to farmers for felling and transit of trees grown on private land. This represent opportunity to diversify farm business.

### **Background:**

- Today, marketing is extremely crucial and almost every sector has embraced marketing principles to ensure best possible outcomes. However, agricultural development in India has entirely ignored the potential of marketing and has continued to follow its old trajectory.
- Therefore, the benefits that can be accrued from agriculture are largely untapped. Productivity in some states is regrettably low and there is a vast disconnect between prices received by farmers and the prices paid by consumers.
- The low levels of productivity, growth and incomes ailing the farm sector in India and causing immense agrarian distress is well known.
- Without undertaking radical reform it is impossible to transform agriculture and double farmers' income. However, state governments have been extremely lax in implementing much needed reforms to modernize agriculture and create a favourable policy and market

environment for farmers.

## **Consumer Protection Act, 1986**

Consumer Protection Act, 1986 is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted in 1986 to protect the interests of consumers in India. It makes provision for the establishment of consumer councils and other authorities for the settlement of consumers' disputes and for matters connected therewith also.

### **Consumer Protection Council**

#### *The Central Consumer Protection Council*

The Central Government shall by notification establish with effect from (w.e.f) such date as it may specify in such notification a Council to be known as the Central Consumer Protection Council.

### **Objectives of Central Council**

The objectives of the Central Council is to promote and to protect the rights of the consumers such as:-

- The right to be protected against the marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property.
- The right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, as the case may be so as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices;
- The right to be assured, wherever possible, access to a variety of goods and services at competitive prices ;
- The right to be heard and to be assured that consumer's interest will receive due consideration at appropriate forums;
- The right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices or restrictive trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers; and
- The right to consumer education.

## **The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018**

- The Bill replaces the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. The Bill enforces consumer rights, and provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.
- Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions will be set up at the District, State and National levels for adjudicating consumer complaints. Appeals from the District and State Commissions will be heard at the next level and from the National Commission by the Supreme Court.
- The Bill sets up a Central Consumer Protection Authority to promote, protect and enforce consumer rights as a class. It can issue safety notices for goods and services, order refunds, recall goods and rule against misleading advertisements.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good or a deficiency in service, he may file a claim of product liability against the manufacturer, the seller, or the service provider.
- The Bill defines contracts as 'unfair' if they significantly affect the rights of consumers. It also defines unfair and restrictive trade practices.
- The Bill establishes Consumer Protection Councils at the district, state and national levels to render advice on consumer protection.

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL**

### **Background:**

- The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 enforces rights of consumers, and provides for redressal of complaints at the district, state and national level.
- Such complaints may be regarding defects in goods or deficiency in services. The Act also recognises offences such as unfair trade practices, which include providing false information regarding the quality or quantity of a good or service, and misleading advertisements.
- Over the years, there have been challenges in the implementation of the Act. A high number of consumers were unaware of their rights

under the Act.

- While the disposal rate of consumer cases was high (about 90%), the time taken for their disposal was long.
- It took 12 months on an average to resolve a consumer case. Also, the Act does not address consumer contracts between a consumer and manufacturer that contain unfair terms.
- In this context, the Law Commission of India had recommended that a separate law be enacted and presented a draft Bill in relation to unfair contract terms.
- In 2011, a Bill to amend the 1986 Act was introduced to enable consumers to file online complaints, and against unfair terms in a contract. However, the Bill lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.
- The Consumer Protection Bill, 2015 was introduced in Lok Sabha to replace the 1986 Act. The Bill introduced various new provisions, which included:
  - (i) product liability;
  - (ii) unfair contracts; and
  - (iii) setting up of a regulatory body.

The Bill was examined by the Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs which submitted its report in April 2016.

The Committee gave several recommendations with regard to:

1. product liability;
  2. powers and functions of the regulatory body (Central Consumer Protection Authority) being set up;
  3. penalties for misleading advertisements and endorsers of such advertisements; and
  4. pecuniary jurisdiction of the adjudicatory body at the district level.
- The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 was introduced in January 2018 to replace the 2015 Bill.

## **Key Features**

## Consumer Complaints

The Bill sets up Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (consumer courts) to hear complaints on matters like:

1. defect in goods or deficiency in services;
2. unfair or restrictive trade practices;
3. excessive pricing;
4. knowingly selling goods or providing services that do not meet safety norms;
5. product liability.
6. Such complaints can be filed electronically and from where the complainant resides or works.

- These Commissions will be set up at District, State and National level, with pecuniary jurisdiction up to Rs one crore, Rs one crore to Rs 10 crore, and above Rs 10 crore, respectively.
- In case of unfair contracts, the State Commissions will hear complaints where the value is up to Rs 10 crore, and National Commissions will hear complaints above that value. These Commissions can declare unfair terms of such contracts to be null and void.
- Appeals from the District Commissions will be heard by the State Commission, and from the State Commission by the National Commission. Appeals from the National Commission will be heard by the Supreme Court.
- The Commissions will attempt to dispose a complaint within three months, if the complaint does not require analysis or testing of commodities.
- If analysis and testing is required, the complaint will be disposed within a period of five months.
- The District Commissions will consist of a President and at least two members. The State and National Commissions will consist of a President and at least four members. The qualifications, tenure, and method of appointment and removal of the President and members of these Commissions will be prescribed by central government through notification.
- The Bill also provides for mediation cells attached to the District,



State and National Commissions. The Commissions may refer a matter for mediation if the parties consent to settle their dispute in this manner.

### Other Bodies established under the Bill

#### **Central Consumer Protection Authority:**

- The Bill sets up the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to promote, protect, and enforce the rights of consumers as a class.
- It will be headed by a Chief Commissioner and comprise other Commissioners. It will have an investigation arm headed by a Director General.
- It may: (i) issue safety notices; (ii) pass orders to recall goods, prevent unfair and restrictive trade practices; (iii) reimburse purchase price paid; and (iv) impose penalties for false and misleading advertisements. It may also file complaints before the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions.

#### **Consumer Protection Councils:**

- The Bill sets up Consumer Protection Councils (CPCs) at the district, state, and national levels as advisory bodies. The Councils will advise on promotion and protection of consumer rights.
- Under the Bill, the Central and State Council will be headed by the Minister-in-charge of Consumer Affairs at the central and state level, respectively. The District Council will be headed by the District Collector.

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## **EXERCISE RAHAT**

### **Why in news?**

The disaster relief exercise 'Exercise Rahat' will be demonstrated in Jaipur, Kota and Alwar in Rajasthan on Feb 11-12.

## **About the Exercise RAHAT**

- The important aspects related to the 'Exercise Rahat' are: On behalf of the Indian Army, Jaipur based Sapta Shakti Command will be conducting Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise EXERCISE RAHAT over a period of two days on 11th and 12th February 2019.
  - The Joint exercise in coordination with NDMA is being conducted to synergise efforts for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. Representatives from Armed Forces, National Disaster Management Response Mechanism (NDMRM), SDMA Rajasthan and DLMAs will be participating in the exercise.
  - The exercise will be conducted simultaneously in three places, beginning at Jaipur in the form of a tabletop exercise and at Kota and Alwar.
  - During the exercise, on-ground capability and coordination amongst various stakeholders will be demonstrated.
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## **Tuberculosis Eradication**

### **Why in news?**

Recently Minister of State (Health and Family Welfare) provided information about government initiatives regarding elimination of TB in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

### **Highlights:**

The Government has taken up many certain steps in order to tackle the problem of TB by 2025:

1. Early diagnosis of all the TB patients, prompt treatment with quality assured daily treatment regimen along with suitable patient support systems to promote adherence to prevent the development of drug



resistance among any patient. To identify the drug resistance at early stage, all TB patient are being screened for detection of resistance under Universal Drug Susceptible Testing (U-DST).

- a. Revised guidelines for Programmatic Management of Drug Resistant TB (PMDT) are being implemented since December 2017.
3. Increase in diagnostic and management capacity for early detection and consequent earlier initiation of treatment. This will aid in decreasing mortality and cutting down transmission of the infection.
4. The country has 1180 functional CBNAAT sites, 89 Culture and Drug Susceptibility Testing (C-DST) laboratories certified in various technologies for drug resistance-TB detection.
5. Newer evidence-based regimens have been introduced to improve the treatment outcomes of drug resistance TB patients.
6. The Shorter MDR Regimen for MDR/RR TB patients (9-11 months of regimen instead of 24 months of conventional regimen)
7. Newer drugs (Bedaquiline) containing regimen has also been introduced country-wide under the program and made accessible to all districts during 2018.
8. Newer drugs (Delamanid) containing regimen has been introduced in 7 states.
9. Various interventions like Integrated mechanism for management of Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs), provision of patients & family counselling at the time of diagnosis and during the course of treatment, airborne infection control as well as grievance redressal mechanism have been introduced to improve patient compliance.
10. The ***Nikshay Poshan Yojana*** provides 500 INR monthly to all TB notified TB patients in order to provide nutritional support and aid in the treatment of TB.
11. Private sector engagement is being promoted to reach out to all patients who are seeking treatment in the private sector and efforts are being made to provide them all diagnostic, treatment and care facilities, including public health action such as counselling, nutritional support, contact tracing etc.

### **About Nikshay Poshan Yojana**

- Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) – is a direct benefit transfer (DBT)

scheme for nutritional support to Tuberculosis (TB) patients.

- It was rolled out from April this year and has made very slow progress.
- Of the 18 lakh registered TB patients across the country, barely 26% of the beneficiary pool, have received cash transfer so far.
- This is because many of the rural poor either do not have a bank account or are migrant patients, whose bank accounts are difficult to be captured. However, the incentives can be distributed in Cash (but implementation is poor).

## **Shehri Samridhi Utsav**

### **Why in news?**

Recently Shehri Samridhi Utsav was launched by Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs.

### **About Shehri Samridhi Utsav:**

- Shehri Samridhi Utsav, an initiative of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA), aims to extend the outreach of Deendayal Antyodaya Mission – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), to the most vulnerable, showcase its initiatives and facilitate access of Self-Help Group (SHG) members to the other government schemes.
- Through Shehri Samridhi Utsav, SHG members across cities are being linked to national government schemes viz. Swachhh Bharat Mission (U), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (U), Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana and National Nutrition Mission.
- A major highlight of Shehri Samridhi Utsav is the National Exhibition cum sale of SHG products and National Street Food Festival being organized in New Delhi.
- Over 100 stalls are being set up in Central Delhi with various handlooms, handicrafts, snacks and other local products made by 200 Self Help Groups representing 23 states. 40 stalls with street food

vendors from 20+ states will be serving the local cuisines.

## **About Deendayal Antyodaya Mission - National Urban Livelihoods Mission**

### **NULM Mission**

- To reduce poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor households by enabling them to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in an appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grassroots level institutions of the poor.
- The mission would aim at providing shelter equipped with essential services to the urban homeless in a phased manner.
- In addition, the Mission would also address livelihood concerns of the urban street vendors by facilitating access to suitable spaces, institutional credit, social security and skills to the urban street vendors for accessing emerging market opportunities.

### **Values**

The mission will espouse the following values:

- Ownership and productive involvement of the urban poor and their institutions in all processes
- Transparency in programme design and implementation, including institution - building and capacity strengthening
- Accountability of government functionaries and the community
- Partnerships with industry and other stakeholders and
- Community self-reliance, self-dependence, self-help and mutual-help

### **Strategy**

NULM will adopt the following strategy:

- Building capacity of the urban poor, their institutions and the machinery involved in the implementation of livelihoods development

and poverty alleviation programmes through handholding support

- Enhancing and expanding existing livelihoods options of the urban poor
- Building skills to enable access to growing market-based job opportunities offered by emerging urban economies
- Training for and support to the establishment of micro-enterprises by the urban poor – self and group
- Ensure availability and access for the urban homeless population to permanent 24- hour shelters including the basic infrastructural facilities like water supply, sanitation, safety and security
- Cater to the needs of especially vulnerable segments of the urban homeless like the dependent children, aged, disabled, mentally ill, and recovering patients etc., by creating special sections within homeless shelters and provisioning special service linkages for them
- To establish strong rights-based linkages with other programmes which cover the right of the urban homeless to food, healthcare, education, etc. and ensure access for homeless populations to various entitlements, including to social security pensions, PDS, ICDS, feeding programmes, drinking water, sanitation, identity, financial inclusion, school admission etc., and to affordable housing
- To address livelihood concerns of the urban street vendors by facilitating access to suitable spaces, institutional credit, social security and skills to the urban street vendors for accessing emerging market opportunities.

