NATIONAL TEACHERS' AWARD

Recently, the Department of Higher Education, Union Ministry of Education selected 16 teachers in HEIs and Polytechnic for National Awards to Teachers (NAT) 2024.

- The purpose of this award is to **celebrate the unique contribution** of some of the finest **teachers** in the country and to honor those teachers who through their commitment and industry have not only **improved the quality of school education** but also enriched the lives of their students.

- This award is conferred on **the exemplary teachers/faculty members** of higher education **institutions and Polytechnics**.

- **Eligibility:** The award is open to all the **faculty members of colleges**/universities/higher educational institutions/polytechnics in India. The candidates should satisfy the following conditions:
  - The nominee should be a regular faculty member.
  - He must have at **least five years of full-time experience** (undergraduate or postgraduate level).
  - The nominee should **not be over 55 years of age** as of the last date of receiving the application for the awards.
  - **Vice-Chancellor/Director/Principal (regular or officiating) are not eligible** to apply. However, individuals who were in such positions, but below 55 years of age and still in active service are eligible.

- The winners will receive **a medal** and a certificate worth **Rs 50,000.**

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister has approved 12 new project proposals under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP) with an estimated investment of Rs. 28,602 crore.

- It is India's most ambitious **infrastructure programme** aiming to develop new industrial cities as **"Smart Cities"** and converging next generation technologies across infrastructure sectors.

- It aims to facilitate investments from **both large anchor industries and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises** (MSMEs), serving as catalysts to achieve the government's ambitious goal of **$2 trillion in exports by 2030.**

- Under this programme the newly sanctioned industrial areas are:
  - Khurpia in Uttarakhand, Rajpura-Patiala in Punjab, Dighi in Maharashtra, Palakkad in Kerala, Agra and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, Gaya in Bihar, Zaheerabad in Telangana, Orvakal and Kopparthy in Andhra Pradesh, and Jodhpur-Pali in Rajasthan.
  - These sites will soon host **state-of-the-art industrial smart cities**, each designed to foster a vibrant industrial ecosystem. The proposed industrial nodes would focus on creating **regional manufacturing hubs** across the country.
  - The development of these industrial cities is envisioned **as greenfield smart cities** built to global standards, embodying the **'plug-n-play' and 'walk-to-work' concepts.**
  - This innovative approach ensures that the cities will be equipped with advanced infrastructure designed to **support sustainable and efficient industrial operations**.
  - The projects are closely aligned with the **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan**, which focuses on integrated and seamless multi-modal connectivity.

ANUBHAV AWARDS

Recently, the Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW) organised 7th Anubhav Awards ceremony for recognising the contribution made by the Central Government employees while in service.

ANUBHAV Awards recognizes the **contribution made by Retired Officials to Nation building** while working in Government and to document the administrative history of India by written narratives.

- The ANUBHAV Portal, established in **March 2015,** serves as an online platform for retiring and retired government employees to share their experiences.
  - The portal was launched by the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare under the Union Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.

  Objectives
  - It aims to create a **database of significant suggestions** and work experiences.
  - It channels the human resource of retiring employees for nation building.
  - It aims to enable Ministries/ Departments to take crucial steps while considering useful and replicable suggestions.
- **Eligibility:** To participate in the scheme, retiring Central Government employees/pensioners are required to submit their Anubhav write ups, **8 months prior to retirement and up to 1 year** after their retirement.
- Thereafter, the write-ups will be published after assessment by concerned Ministries/Departments. The published write-ups will be shortlisted for Anubhav Awards and Jury Certificates.
- Each ANUBHAV Awardees will be felicitated with **a medal and certificate and a Prize of 10,000 rupees**, whereas a Jury certificate Winner will be presented with a medal and a certificate.

HIMACHAL BILL RAISES WOMEN'S MARRIAGE AGE

Legislative Process and Constitutional Implications of Himachal Pradesh's Marriage Age Bill

- The Himachal Pradesh Bill seeks to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage (PCM) Act by raising the minimum marriage age for women to 21 years, conflicting with the central law that sets it at 18.

- Since **marriage is a subject under the Concurrent List**, both the central and state governments can legislate on it.

- However, when a state law contradicts a central law, Article 254(1) of the Constitution renders the conflicting part of the state law void unless the President gives assent under Article 254(2).

- The Bill must therefore be reserved for President's consideration by the Governor of Himachal Pradesh.

- The President's assent is necessary for the Bill to become law, similar to the process seen with Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill.

Debate surrounding the minimum age for marriage for girls

- The demand to raise the minimum age for marriage for girls to 21 in India has been growing due to several social, economic, and health-related factors:
  - **Gender Equality and Education**
    - **Higher Education**: Raising the marriage age allows girls more time to complete their education. This will improve their career prospects.
    - **Empowerment**: Delaying marriage can help empower women by giving them more time to develop skills and become financially independent.
  - **Health and Well-being**
    - **Maternal Health**: Early marriage often leads to early pregnancies, which are associated with higher risks of maternal and infant mortality.

- Raising the marriage age allows girls to attain physical and emotional maturity, leading to safer pregnancies and better health outcomes for both mothers and children.
  - **Child Development**: Delaying motherhood gives women the opportunity to provide better care and nurturing to their children.
    - They are more likely to be emotionally and economically prepared.
- **Reducing Child Marriage**
  - **Combatting Child Marriage**: Child marriage is still prevalent in some parts of India, leading to various social issues such as domestic violence, lack of education, and poverty.
- **Economic Development**
  - **Workforce Participation**: Delaying marriage can increase women's participation in the workforce, which contributes to economic development.

Implementation challenges

- There has been limited success in curbing marriage of girls below the age of 18 years.
  - In 2020, only 785 cases were registered under the 2006 act highlighting the fact that the detection of such marriages remains low.
- This raises the question of whether the increase in the minimum age would have any significant impact in reducing child marriages.

WHAT ARE DEEPFAKES?

South Korea's president recently ordered a crackdown on an epidemic of digital sex crimes targeting women and girls who become the unwitting victims of deepfake pornography.

- Deepfakes are synthetic media, including images, videos, and audio, **generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI)** technology that **portray something that does not exist in reality** or events that have never occurred.

- The term deepfake **combines deep, taken from AI deep-learning technology** (a type of machine learning that involves multiple levels of processing), and fake, addressing that the content is not real.

- It **can create people who do not exist**, and it can fake real people saying and doing things they did not say or do.

- Background: The origin of the word "deepfake" can be traced back to 2017, when a Reddit user with the username "deepfakes", posted explicit videos of celebrities.

  Working:
  - They are created by **machine learning models**, which **use neural networks** to **manipulate images and videos**.
  - To make a deepfake video of someone, **a creator would first train** a **neural network on many hours of real video** footage of the person **to give it a realistic "understanding"** of what he or she looks like from many angles and under different lighting.
  - Then **they combine the trained network with computer-graphics** techniques to superimpose a copy of the person onto a different actor.

  Deepfake technology is now being **used for nefarious purposes like scams and hoaxes**, **celebrity pornography, election manipulation**, **social engineering**, automated disinformation attacks, identity theft, and financial fraud.

- They differ from other forms of false information by being **very difficult to identify as false.**

WHAT IS THE BUREAU OF POLICE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (BPR&D)?

The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) recently celebrated its 54th Foundation Day at its headquarters in New Delhi.

- BPR&D was set up in **1970 under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs** by replacing the Police Research and Advisory Council.

- **Headquarters: New Delhi**

- It was established with a **mandate to:**

    o Identify the **needs and problems of the police** in the country.

    o **Undertake research projects and studies**, and suggest modalities to overcome problems and challenges and meet the needs and requirements of the police.

    o Keep abreast of the **latest developments in the fields of science and technology**, both in India and abroad, with a view to promoting the use of appropriate technology in police work.

    Over the years, the BPR&D has also been entrusted with the responsibility of **monitoring the training needs** and quality of training in the **States and Central Police Organisations,** and providing assistance for the same, as well as **assisting the States in the modernization of the State Police Forces** and Correctional Administration.

- BPR&D has also been tasked to assist the Ministry of Home Affairs and the CPFs, etc., in the **development of Standards, Quality Requirements (QRs), etc**., **with respect to various types of equipment** and items pertaining to infrastructure.

- More recently, the BPR&D has also been entrusted with the responsibility of anchoring and **coordinating the work of the National Police Mission.**

- The Bureau was initially established with the following two divisions; **Research, Statistics & Publication and Development.**

- On the **recommendations of the Gore-Committee**, the bureau created a Training Division in 1973.
- The BPRD has **five Central Detective Training Institutes at Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Ghaziabad, and Jaipur** dedicated to the training of police officers and other stakeholders.

WHAT IS THE AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (AIF) SCHEME?

The Central Government recently expanded the scope of the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund (AIF) scheme to make it more attractive, as part of its objective to strengthen farm-related infrastructure facilities in the country.

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) Scheme is a **Central Sector Scheme** which was launched in 2020.

- **Objective**: The scheme shall provide a **medium- to long-term debt financing facility** for investment in viable projects for **post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets** through interest subvention and financial support.
- The duration of the Scheme shall be from **FY2020 to FY2032 (10 years).**

Who is eligible?
- o Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)
- o Marketing Cooperative Societies
- o Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs)
- o Farmers
- o Self Help Group (SHG)
- o Joint Liability Groups (JLG)
- o Multipurpose Cooperative Societies
- o Agri-entrepreneurs and Startups

- o Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public-Private Partnership Projects.

- **Exclusions**: Public Sector Undertakings **(PSUs) are not directly eligible** under the scheme, but **projects sponsored by them under PPP are eligible**.

- **All scheduled commercial banks**, scheduled **cooperative banks**, Regional Rural Banks (**RRBs**), **Small Finance Banks**, Non-Banking Financial Companies (**NBFCs**), and National Cooperative Development Corporation (**NCDC**) **may participate** to provide this financing facility.

- If required, **need-based refinance support** will be **made available by NABARD** to all eligible lending entities, including cooperative banks and RRBs, as per its policy.

Features:

- o All **loans up to a limit of ₹ 2 crores** under this financing facility will have interest subvention of 3% per annum. This subvention will be available for a maximum period of 7 years.

- o An **applicant can put up to 25 projects** in different locations, and each of such projects will be eligible under the scheme for a loan upto ₹ 2 crore.

- o This limit of 25 projects is **applicable to private sector entities**, such as farmers, Agri entrepreneurs, and start-ups.

- o This **limitation of 25 projects will not be applicable to state agencies**, cooperatives, national and state federations of cooperatives, FPOs, federations of FPOs, SHGs, and federations of SHGs.

- o **Multiple projects in one location are also eligible** with an overall cap of ₹2 crore.

- o Under the scheme, it is mandatory for borrowers to contribute at least 10% of total project cost, irrespective of available capital subsidy.

- o The moratorium for repayment under this financing facility may vary, subject to a minimum of **6 months and a maximum of 2 years.**