

### DECODING WHITE PAPER ON THE INDIAN ECONOMY

#### Why in News?

- The Union Finance Minister presented a “White Paper” on the Indian economy (prepared by the Ministry of Finance) in the Lok Sabha.
- The government had announced in the Union Interim Budget that it would come out with a 'White Paper' to compare the economic performance of 10 years of the Congress-led UPA govt with that of 10 years of the BJP-led NDA govt.

#### What is a White Paper?

- A white paper **typically provides information about a specific issue** to make people aware of the nature and scope of the problem and the possible ways to resolve it.
- **Apart from governments**, a white paper is often used by businesses and other agencies to showcase their products and promote them.
- One of the earliest instances of a government presenting a white paper is of **1922**, when then British PM Winston Churchill introduced one to detail his government’s policy on Palestine.
- **In India**,
  - There are no specific guidelines on the issue or tabling of white papers.
  - The Opposition is well within its right to demand a white paper from the government on issues which it needs clarity on. **For example**, they demanded one on black money recently, demonetisation, etc.
  - In the last 10 years, the incumbent government tabled only two white papers – the other one on the **Railways in 2014**, detailing freight and fare rationalisation, capacity augmentation, etc.

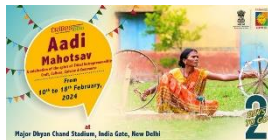
#### Highlights of the White Paper on the Indian Economy and its Objectives:

- **The 58-page white paper has three main parts.**
  - Part 1 discusses the macroeconomic situation during the 10 years of UPA rule.

- Part 2 provides the current status of the various corruption scams of the UPA government.
  - Part 3 shows how the NDA turned the economy around.
  - **Objectives of the white paper:**
    - It seeks to inform every one of the **nature and extent of governance, economic and fiscal crises that the NDA government had** when it assumed office in 2014.
    - It informs about the **policies and measures that the (NDA) government took** to restore the health of the economy since 2014.
    - **It wants to spark a broader, more informed debate** about the importance of national interest and fiscal responsibility in governance over political expediency.
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## AADI MAHOTSAV

The President of India will inaugurate the Aadi Mahotsav 2024, an annual national tribal festival, at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi on February 10.



### About the Aadi Mahotsav:

- It is organised by **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED)** under the aegis of the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, and will showcase the rich diversity of India's tribal heritage.
- It is not only a platform to exhibit the extraordinary talent and craftsmanship of tribal artisans but also an opportunity to interact, learn, and contribute to the empowerment of tribal communities.
- The festival will feature an expanded showcase with over 300 stalls, offering varied display of Tribal art, handicrafts, natural produce, and delectable tribal cuisine.

### What is TRIFED?

- It is a national-level organisation under the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- It is primarily engaged in the **development and marketing of tribal handicrafts and natural products**.

- It came into existence in 1987 and got registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984 (now the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002).
- **Mandate:** Capability enhancement for Tribals, promotion of tribal products, and creation of marketing opportunities for the Tribals with a view to ensuring remunerative prices for their products and augmenting their income on a sustainable basis.
- It has been entrusted by the Government of India to implement its proposed Minimum Support Price Scheme for Minor Forest Produce.
- **Head Office:** New Delhi

## DIGIREADY CERTIFICATION

Recently, the Quality Council of India (QCI) and Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) announced the launch of the DigiReady Certification (DRC) portal.



### About DigiReady Certification:

- In this initiative, QCI, in conjunction with ONDC, aims to **assess and certify digital readiness** of **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** entities.
- By leveraging this **online self-assessment tool**, MSMEs can evaluate their preparedness to seamlessly onboard as sellers on the ONDC platform, thereby expanding their digital capabilities and business potential.
- The portal is meticulously designed to facilitate a **streamlined seller journey**, ensuring that MSMEs and small retailers can integrate seamlessly into existing digitised workflows.
- The certification process evaluates various **aspects of digital readiness**, including the presence of necessary documentation for online operations, proficiency in using software and technology, integration with existing digitised workflows, and efficient management of orders and catalogue offerings.
- **Significance:** This initiative presents additional business prospects for sellers, allowing them to become integral to the digital ecosystem.

## Key points about Quality Council of India

- It was established in 1997 jointly by the **Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, and the **Indian industry**.
- It is registered as a non-profit organisation under the **Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860**.
- It is operated through the constituent Boards of QCI, primarily the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB), and the National Accreditation Board for Testing & Calibration Laboratories (NABL),
- **Composition**
  - It is governed by a Council of 38 members with equal representations of government, industry and consumers.
  - The **Chairman of QCI** is appointed by the **Prime Minister** on the recommendation of the industry to the government.

## SARTHI PORTAL

Recently, the Union Agriculture minister unveiled the 'Sarathi' platform, which seeks to provide a full suite of insurance products, including PMFBY, geared specifically for farmers and rural populations in India.



### About SARTHI Portal:

- Sandbox for Agricultural and Rural Security, Technology and Insurance (SARTHI) is the comprehensive **digital insurance platform** launched in collaboration with **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India**.
- It will offer a digitised insurance journey, simplifying the process for farmers. The portal will be a single-window platform for viewing, purchasing, and availing insurance products.
- The platform has digital payment options and streamlined premium collection, effortless claim initiation, tracking and resolution besides user-friendly interfaces for stakeholders.

- Also, a spectrum of insurance products will be introduced on the portal in a phased manner.
  - In the first phase, **personal accident and hospital cash policies**, while in the second phase health, shop and home insurance and in the third phase tractor, two-wheeler, livestock and non-PMFBY insurance products.

## WHAT IS THE BUILD-OPERATE-TRANSFER (BOT) MODEL?

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has come up with a list of high-traffic density corridors for private developers to build and operate under the build-operate-transfer (BOT) model.



### About Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Model:

- It is a **type of agreement** often used in infrastructure projects, particularly in the construction and operation of public facilities or utilities.
- It is a **conventional public-private partnership (PPP) model** in which a private entity (usually a company or consortium) is granted the rights and responsibilities to design, finance, construct, operate, and maintain a specific project or facility for a defined period of time.
- The private entity, known as the "concessionaire" or "developer," bears the financial and operational risks associated with the project during the contract period.
- The typical lifecycle of a BOT contract involves three phases:
  - **Build:** The concessionaire is responsible for financing, designing, and constructing the infrastructure project. This phase usually includes obtaining the necessary permits and approvals.
  - **Operate:** After the construction is completed, the concessionaire operates and maintains the facility for a specified duration. This can involve providing services, managing operations, and generating revenue from the facility (e.g., tolls, fees, or user charges).

- **Transfer:** At the end of the contract period, the ownership and control of the facility are transferred back to the government or public authority, which may have been the original owner. The transfer is often accompanied by a **predetermined valuation** or compensation mechanism.
  - The private company gains revenue during the concession period, while the government benefits from infrastructure development without upfront investment.
  - However, the specifics of the financial arrangements and incentives **vary depending on the individual BOT contract.**
  - BOT is particularly **well-suited for greenfield projects** (new projects without prior work) and large-scale, capital-intensive projects.
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## FISHERIES SECTOR IN INDIA

- Fisheries and aquaculture are an important source of food, nutrition, employment and income in India.
- The sector **provides livelihood to more than 25 million fishers and fish farmers at the primary level** and twice the number along the value chain.
- India is the **3<sup>rd</sup> largest fish producing country**, contributing 8 percent to the global fish production and ranks **2<sup>nd</sup> in aquaculture production.**
- The fish production in 2021-22 is 16.24 Million Tonnes (MTs) comprising of marine fish production of 4.12 MTs and 12.12 MTs from Aquaculture.

### Challenges Faced by the Fisheries Sector:

- **Overfishing/Unsustainable Fishing:**
  - Overfishing refers to the practice of catching fish faster than they are able to reproduce.
  - The large fish are particularly vulnerable to this, as they live many years and are slow to reproduce.

- As overfishing takes place over time, these species become depleted and fisherman begin "fishing down the food chain," shifting focus from catching predators to species lower in the food web, like sardines and squid.
- Removing these prey species from the marine environment impact predators and the aquatic ecosystem.
- Fishing subsidies are estimated to be as high as **USD 35 billion worldwide**, of which USD 20 billion directly contributes to overfishing.
- According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) data, the **percentage of stocks fished at biologically unsustainable levels increased from 10 percent in 1974 to 34.2 percent in 2017.**
- **Bycatch:**
  - Bycatch refers to the fish, seafood, turtles, seabirds and other animals that are not targeted by fisheries, but are incidentally caught by broad-sweeping fishing mechanisms like gillnets and bottom trawls.
  - Both these methods account for the careless and wasteful deaths of countless sea creatures every day.
- **Illegal Fishing:**
  - As fish species become more depleted and demand for product rises, there have been increases in illegal fishing.
  - This takes many forms, including: keeping undersized fish, fishing in territories without permission, catching fish off-season, failing to record catch information, and using illegal procedures.
- Other key challenges faced, to a certain extent, include **increasing availability of quality seed, cold chain, meeting requirements of infrastructure and post-harvest infrastructure.**

## Steps Taken by the Government for the Fisheries Sector:

- The **Indian Blue Revolution** has led to a major improvement the fishing and aquaculture industries.

- The industries are regarded as sunrise sectors and are anticipated to have a big impact on the Indian economy.
- The **Department of Fisheries** has taken several steps for robust fisheries management:
  - Imposing of uniform fishing ban in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) beyond territorial waters in East and West Coasts for a period of 61 days annually,
  - Ban on destructive fishing methods,
  - Discouraging juvenile fishing,
  - Promotion of river and sea ranching,
  - Diversification of fisheries activities,
  - Use of by-catch and juvenile fish excluders, turtle exclusion devices,
  - Providing need-based support to States/UTs for formulation and implementation of fisheries management plans,
  - Promotion of deep sea fishing and measures to protect the aquatic ecology.
- Foreseeing the immense potential for development of fisheries and for providing focused attention to the sector, the Government in its **Union Budget for 2019-20**, announced a new scheme, the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana**.
- The PMMSY intends to address critical gaps in fish production and productivity, quality, technology, post-harvest infrastructure and management, modernisation and strengthening of value chain, establishing a robust fisheries management network and fisheries' welfare.

## WHAT ARE FOREVER CHEMICALS?



Researchers recently demonstrated a new lab-based method to detect traces of Forever Chemicals from food packaging material, water, and soil samples in just three minutes or less.



## About Forever Chemicals:

- **PFAS (Per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances), also known as the Forever Chemicals, are a large chemical family of over 4,700 highly persistent man-made chemicals.**
- **These were first developed in the 1940s and are now found in a variety of consumer products, including nonstick pans, water-resistant textiles, and fire suppression foams, due to their ability to repel both grease and water.**
- **PFAS are the most persistent synthetic chemicals to date. They hardly degrade in the natural environment and have been found in the blood of people and animals all over the world, and are present at low levels in a variety of food products.**
- **The secret to PFAS's indestructibility lies in its chemical bonds. PFAS contains many carbon-fluorine bonds, which are the strongest bonds in organic chemistry.**
- **These chemicals also cause pollution at every stage of production. At the PFAS chemical manufacturing facilities and garment factories, they often contaminate the air, water, and soil of the surrounding environment.**
- **Exposure to PFAS is linked to cancers, weakened immune systems among children, weight gain, and a wide range of other health problems.**