

UGC COMMITTEE PROPOSES NEW UNIVERSITY DEGREE NAMES

Why in News?

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) plans to introduce new college degree names that align with global norms and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- These degrees will include a Bachelor of Science in fields such as arts, humanities, management, and commerce.

About University Grants Commission (UGC):

- The University Grants Commission of India is a **statutory body** under the provisions of UGC Act, 1956.
- It is **responsible for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education.**
- It provides recognition to universities in India, and disburses funds to such recognized universities and college.
- **Nodal Ministry** – Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education

Mandate of UGC:

- Promoting and coordinating university education.
- Determining and maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities.
- Framing regulations on minimum standards of education.
- Monitoring developments in the field of collegiate and university education; disbursing grants to the universities and colleges.
- Serving as a vital link between the Union and State governments and institutions of higher learning.
- Advising the Central and State governments on the measures necessary for the improvement of university education.

COMMANDO BATTALION FOR RESOLUTE ACTION (COBRA)

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is now considering a change in the training pattern of the elite anti-Naxal unit Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA).



About Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA):

- It is a specialized force which has been raised for guerilla/jungle warfare type operations for dealing with Maoist and therefore also known as 'jungle warriors'.
- Personnel for CoBRA are selected from CRPF as CoBRA is integral part of CRPF.
- They undergo rigorous commando & jungle warfare training before being posted to CoBRA BNs for anti-Naxal operations.
- In all there are 10 CoBRA Units Raised between 2008-2011. Most of its 10 battalions are deployed for anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand apart from some units tasked for counter-insurgency operations in the northeastern part of the country.

What is the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)?

- It is the premier central police force of the Union of India for internal security.
- It functions under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) of the Government of India.
- History of CRPF:
 - Originally constituted as the Crown Representative Police in 1939, it is one of the oldest Central para military forces (now termed as Central Armed Police Force).
 - CRPF was raised as a sequel to the political unrest and the agitations in the then princely States of India following the Madras Resolution of the All-India Congress Committee in 1936 and the ever-growing desire of the Crown Representative to help the vast majority of the native States to preserve law and order as a part of the imperial policy.
 - It became the Central Reserve Police Force on enactment of the CRPF Act on 28th December 1949.
- Duties performed by the CRPF are
 - Crowd control, Riot control

- **Counter Militancy / Insurgency operations**, Dealing with Left Wing Extremism
- **Overall co-ordination of large-scale security arrangement** specially with regard to elections in disturbed areas.
- **Protection of VIPs and vital installations.**
- **Checking environmental de-gradation** and protection of local Flora and Fauna
- **Fighting aggression during War time**
- **Participating in UN Peace Keeping Mission**
- **Rescue and Relief operations** at the time of Natural Calamities.

PENSION FUND REGULATORY AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (PFRDA)

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) Chairman recently said that a pension scheme with minimum assured returns is in the works by the PFRDA, which may entail higher premium payments for higher returns.



About Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA):

- It is a statutory regulatory body set up under PFRDA Act enacted in 2014.
- **Objective:** To promote old age income security by establishing, developing, and regulating pension funds and to protect the interests of subscribers to schemes of pension funds and related matters.
- It comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Composition:** It consists of a Chairperson and not more than six members, of whom at least three shall be Whole-Time Members, to be appointed by the Central Government.
- **Functions:**
 - Regulate National Pension System (NPS) and other pension schemes to which PFRDA Act applies;
 - Establish, develop and regulate pension funds;

- **Protect the interest of pension fund subscribers;**
- **Register and regulate intermediaries;**
- **Laying down norms for management of corpus of pension funds;**
- **Establish grievance redressal mechanism for subscribers;**
- **Settle disputes among intermediaries and also between intermediaries and subscribers;**
- **Train intermediaries and educate subscribers and the general public with respect to pension, retirement savings, and related issues;**
- **Call for information, conduct inquiries, investigations, and audit of intermediaries and other entities connected with pension funds;**

Key Facts about National Pension System (NPS):

- **It is a government-sponsored pension scheme launched in January 2004 for government employees.**
- **It was opened to all sections in 2009.**
- **NPS is mandatorily applicable to Central Government employees (except Armed Forces) recruited on or after 01.01.2004.**
- **Under NPS, a subscriber can contribute regularly to a pension account during her working life, withdraw a part of the corpus in a lumpsum and use the remaining corpus to buy an annuity to secure a regular income after retirement.**

ANTARDRISHTI DASHBOARD



Recently, the Reserve Bank of India Governor launched a financial inclusion dashboard named 'Antardrishti'.

About Antardrishti dashboard:

- It provides the necessary knowledge to evaluate and **track the development of financial inclusion** by recording relevant data.
- It will also make it possible to assess the degree of financial exclusion at a **local level across the nation** so that such places may be addressed.

What is Financial Inclusion?

- It aimed to provide **access to affordable and appropriate financial products** and services, such as savings accounts, credit, insurance, and payment systems.
- The Reserve Bank has been promoting financial inclusion through various policy initiatives.
- To measure the extent of financial inclusion the central bank had constructed the **Financial Inclusion (FI) Index in 2021**.
- It is based on three dimensions of financial inclusion -- '**Access**', '**Usage**' and '**Quality**'.
- The FI-Index has been conceptualised as a comprehensive index incorporating details of banking, investments, insurance, postal as well as the pension sector in consultation with the government and respective sectoral regulators.
- The index captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging between 0 and 100, where 0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion.

FINANCIAL SERVICES INSTITUTION BUREAU (FSIB)

Recently, the Financial Services Institution Bureau (FSIB) has selected new chiefs for the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re) and National Insurance Company (NIC).

FSIB

About Financial Services Institution Bureau (FSIB):

- **What is it?** It's a government body set up under the Department of Financial Services (DFI) by replacing the Bank Board's Bureau (BBB).
- **Structure:**
 - It is headed by a **chairman who is nominated by the central government**.
 - The board would comprise the **Secretaries of the DFS**, the **chairman of IRDAI**, and a **deputy governor of the RBI**.
 - Additionally, it will have three part-time members who are experts in banking and three more from the insurance sector.

The Primary role of FSIB:

- To **identify manpower capabilities** and ensure proper selection of talent for senior positions at financial institutions owned by the government.
- It is entrusted **with making recommendations for the appointment** of full-time **directors and non-executive chairmen** of state-run financial services institutions.
- The final decision on the FSIB recommendation would be taken by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister.
- It would also issue guidelines for **selecting general managers and directors** of public sector general insurance companies.
- It will also be involved in formulating and **developing business strategies** for state-run banks and helping them in their fund-raising plans.
- It would also **monitor and assess the performance** of **public sector banks**, government-owned financial institutions and insurance companies.

FOOD SAFETY INDEX

Recently, the union Health Minister released the fifth State Food Safety Index in New Delhi.



About Food Safety Index:

- The Index is an annual assessment **released by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**.
- It was **started in 2018-19** and serves as a tool to propel States and Union Territories to enhance their performance and establish robust food safety ecosystems within their jurisdictions
- This index is based on the performance of the State/ UT on **five significant parameters**, namely, Human Resources and Institutional Data, Compliance, Food Testing – Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training & Capacity Building and Consumer Empowerment.
- The Index is a **dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking** model that provides an objective framework for evaluating food safety across all States/UTs.
- **Ranking of the States and Union Territories in the 2022 -23 Report**

- **Among the large state category:** Kerala is the top-ranking state followed by Punjab and Tamil Nadu.
- **Among the small states category:** Goa is the top-ranking state followed by Manipur, and Sikkim in the Small States category.
- **Among the Union Territories category:** Jammu and Kashmir, Chandigarh, and Delhi

KERALA FIBRE OPTICAL NETWORK (KFON)

Why in news?

- The Kerala government has officially launched the Kerala Fibre Optical Network (KFON).
- Through KFON, Kerala aims to reduce the digital divide by ensuring high speed broadband internet access to all houses and government offices.
- Kerala was the first state to declare the right to internet as a basic right.
- **About**
 - KFON will act as an infrastructure provider.
 - KFON is an optical fibre cable network of 30,000 kms, with 375 Points-of-Presence across Kerala.
 - The KFON infrastructure will be shared with all service providers, including cable operators.
 - While KFON will do the cable work for government offices, individual beneficiaries will have to depend on private, local internet service providers.
 - KFON promises an internet speed from 10 mbps to 10 Gbps. The quality of mobile phone calls is also expected to improve.
 - Once KFON is connected to mobile towers in Kerala, it will speed up transition to 4G and 5G.

Aim

- The project is aimed at ensuring **universal Internet access** and narrowing the digital divide, which has become especially acute after the COVID-19 outbreak.
- For this it will create a core network infrastructure (information highway) with non-discriminatory access to all service providers.
- **Stakeholders**

- KFON project is a joint venture of Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) and Kerala State IIT Infrastructure Limited.
- **Implementation**- by a consortium led by Central PSU Bharat Electronics Limited
- **Consultant** –Price Waterhouse Coopers
- **Operations and maintenance** by Kerala State Information Technology Infrastructure Ltd (KSITIL)
- **System integrator** - Bharat Electronics (BEL)
- **Funding** -The project is fully funded by Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), the state government agency for funding infrastructure projects.
- **Beneficiaries**
 - Through KFON Internet connections would be provided free of cost to 20 lakh below-poverty-line (BPL) families.
 - In the first stage of KFON, the government wants to provide connectivity to 30,000 government offices and 14,000 BPL families in the state.

What was the need for KFON?

- **Existing TELCOS have only limited infrastructure in the rural areas**
 - The telecom sector is dominated by private players.
 - The government is of the view that existing TELCOS have only limited infrastructure in the rural areas.
 - Their wireless connectivity infrastructure is providing only limited bandwidth.
 - Due to the low business potential in rural areas, private TELCOs are not keen to enhance connectivity infrastructure.
- **Limited reach of Kerala State Wide Area Network (KSWAN)**
 - KSWAN, the existing state Information Infrastructure connecting government offices, is limited to 3,800 premises.
 - Hence, the Government in 2017 decided to establish KFON, for efficient service delivery, assured Quality of Service, reliability, interoperability, and security.