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TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT FUND SCHEME

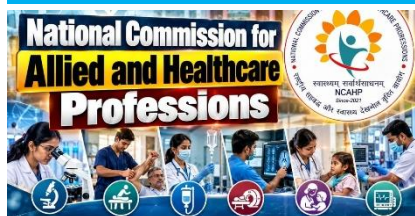


- It has been established to **promote self-reliance in Defence Technology** as a part of the 'Make in India' initiative.
- **Objective:** It encourages the participation of public/private industries, especially MSMEs and startups, so as to create an ecosystem for **enhancing cutting-edge technology capability in the defence sector.**
- **Project Duration:** The maximum development period will be four years.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Defence.
- It is **executed by DRDO** to promote self-reliance in cutting-edge defence and aerospace technologies.
- **Eligibility criteria:**
 - **Entity Type:**
 - A public limited company, a private limited company, a partnership firm, a limited liability partnership, a one-person company, or a sole proprietorship registered as per applicable Indian laws registered in India especially MSMEs and Startups.
 - The industry must be **owned and controlled by a resident Indian citizen.**
 - An entity with excess of **49 percent foreign investment** not be eligible.
 - **Start up:**
 - Startups must be recognized by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** as per Government of India (GOI) guidelines.
 - Startups **incorporated for less than three years** from date of submission of application will be considered as nascent startups.

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- A **nascent startup** should be incubated at one of the Central/State government assisted incubators.
- Startups should not have received any grants/grants-in-aid by any government scheme for a similar technology.
- The **startup must be owned and controlled** by a **Resident Indian citizen** with a shareholding of at least 51%.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR ALLIED AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS



- It is a **statutory body** established under the NCAHP Act 2021.

- It was established under the Ministry of Health and

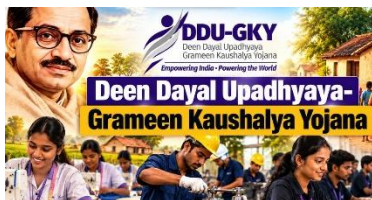
Family Welfare.

- It aims to **enhance the quality of healthcare services** by ensuring that all practitioners in the allied health fields meet established national standards.
- It covers **allied and healthcare Professions** categorized under **broad recognized categories**.

Key Functions:

- **Standardization:** It provides a framework for the **evaluation of educational institutions** and training programs and ensures that **practitioners are equipped** with the necessary skills for high-quality patient care.
- **Registration and Accreditation:** It oversees the **registration, training, and accreditation of various allied healthcare practitioners**.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** It promotes **continuous learning among** allied healthcare professionals, encouraging them to update their skills in accordance with the latest advancements in the healthcare industry.
- **Research and Development:** It engages in **research and development** and adoption of latest scientific advancement and connected matters.

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DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA- GRAMEEN KAUSHALYA YOJANA

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched in 2014, under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission.
- It provides placement linked skill training to poor rural youth.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Rural Development
- Key Features:
 - Target: It has been providing placement-linked skill training to rural youth aged 15-35 years from poor households.
 - Social Inclusion: It also promotes social inclusion through mandatory coverage of SC/ST communities (50%), women (33%), and persons with disabilities (5%).
 - The Government notified the upgraded DDU-GKY 2.0 Guidelines in 2025 and framework provides training across multiple sectors based on industry requirements, including aerospace and aviation, agriculture, beauty and wellness, green jobs, healthcare, textiles, and others.
- Initiatives under DDU-GKY 2.0:
 - Roshni: It addresses the specific needs of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected districts notified by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - It mandates residential skill training, with 40% coverage for women candidates.
 - The initiative has been extended to Aspirational Districts, focusing on local infrastructure, education, health, natural resources, and traditional skills.

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- **Himayat:** It is a special DDU-GKY scheme for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
 - It covers rural and urban youth, **including BPL and APL persons**, and supports wage, self, and gig employment.
 - The scheme is **100% centrally funded** and implemented with State support through dedicated Mission Management Units.
- **North East:** Acknowledging the challenges of unique topography of the North Eastern States, out of the total allocation for DDU-GKY, **10% is earmarked for the North-Eastern States.**
- **Hard to reach Areas:** It has provision for **Special Area Allowance** where Project implementing agencies shall be eligible for a payment at the rate of an additional 10% of the Base training cost per candidate.

BLUE BONDS: INDIA'S NEW OCEAN OF FINANCE

India's **maiden blue bond**, under the **Sagarmala programme**, seeks to bring the ocean economy to the capital markets. Doubts linger on its timing, given signs of hardening global interest rates. As much as ₹1,000 crore is slated to be raised through a blue bond issuance by Sagarmala Finance Corporation Ltd. (SMFCL), the financing arm associated with Sagarmala — one of the critical components of India's mammoth multimodal infrastructure programme, **PM GatiShakti**.

About Blue Bond

- Like a conventional bond, a blue bond is an instrument through which an issuer raises money from investors, promising periodic interest and repayment of principal at maturity.
- The difference lies in its **environmental purpose**: proceeds must go towards clearly identified **water- and ocean-related projects**.
- Key requirements for issuers:
 - A framework explaining where the money will be invested.
 - Impact measurement mechanisms.

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- **Periodic reporting**, to avoid "bluewashing" — the water-sector equivalent of greenwashing.
 - Greenwashing is the deceptive practice of making a product, service, or company appear more environmentally friendly than it actually is.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has already recognised blue bonds as part of sustainable finance instruments and highlighted their potential for India's blue economy.

Why Sagarmala Needs This Bond?

- The government aims to significantly increase the maritime sector's contribution to GDP by expanding ports, inland waterways, shipbuilding and coastal infrastructure — all of which require massive capital.
- For SMFCL specifically, the bond serves a **strategic financial purpose**: correcting an **asset-liability mismatch**.
- **Important Caveat**
 - Not all Sagarmala projects qualify for blue bond financing — only those **demonstrating measurable** ocean or water-related sustainability outcomes are eligible.

Who Stands to Benefit?

- Sagarmala has identified over 200 projects under coastal shipping and inland water transport. Key beneficiary segments:
 - Ro-Ro and Ro-Pax ferry services, Inland water terminals
 - Coastal cargo movement
 - Cruise infrastructure — including terminals at Mumbai, Kochi and Chennai

Conclusion

SMFCL's blue bond is small in size but large in intent — the first test of whether India's ocean economy can tap capital markets directly.

Its success will determine whether blue bonds become a mainstream infrastructure financing tool, or remain a niche sustainability product limited to specialised investors.

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GREATER ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS - FROM RECOVERY TO LANDSCAPE-LEVEL CONSERVATION

- The Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is an iconic species of India's **Brahmaputra and Terai** floodplains and grasslands.
- Historically, its range extended across the northern Indian subcontinent along the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra river systems. Today, wild populations in India are concentrated mainly in Assam, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- India's conservation approach is increasingly **shifting from** merely **protecting** existing rhino populations to **expanding** the species across suitable parts of its historical range.

From Protection to Population Recovery:

- Rhino conservation in India is fundamentally a story of recovery. The population has increased by nearly **170%** — from around 1,500 animals to more than 4,000 by September 2024.
- To consolidate this recovery, the National Conservation Strategy for the Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros (2019) provides a long-term framework based on -
 - Strengthening existing populations.
 - Restoring suitable former habitats.
 - Maintaining genetic security and habitat connectivity.
 - Scientifically planned translocations.
 - Building climate resilience into conservation planning.
- **Phase I - 2026–2031:**
 - The proposed five-year Phase I programme, with **₹77.39 crore** in support through the National CAMPA Authority, covers Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
 - Its priorities include scientific monitoring and protection, habitat restoration and management, translocation planning, community coexistence, and capacity building.

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- **Expansion** of rhino populations into suitable areas of Bihar and Arunachal Pradesh is also a priority.

Rhino Conservation is Equal to Ecosystem Conservation:

- The survival of the rhino is **inseparable** from the health of alluvial and Terai grasslands and wetlands.
- These ecosystems also support species such as swamp deer, wild buffalo, elephants, tigers and grassland birds.
- Grasslands are dynamic ecosystems and require active, science-based management to prevent habitat degradation, inappropriate ecological succession, and invasive species proliferation.
- The **Rhino Conservation Action Plan** therefore focuses on mapping and assessing grasslands and wetlands, identifying invasive species, prioritising restoration sites and developing Protected Area-specific management protocols.

Way Forward:

- India's rhino recovery demonstrates that species decline is not necessarily irreversible when supported by **sustained political commitment**, scientific management and field-level protection.
- The conservation of the Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros ultimately extends beyond a single species.
- Protecting rhino habitats means protecting rivers, wetlands, grasslands, forests, biodiversity and local communities that form **interconnected** ecological landscapes.

Conclusion:

- India's recovery of the Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros is a significant conservation **achievement**.
- The challenge now is to **consolidate** these gains while expanding populations into suitable historical habitats.
- The rhino's recovery is a national achievement; ensuring its long-term survival is a national **responsibility**.

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WHAT IS BASIC CUSTOMS DUTY (BCD)?



- BCD is a type of tax imposed on goods imported into India.

- It is the principal custom duty levied on imported goods.

- It is levied under the Customs Act, 1962.
- It is calculated as a percentage of the assessed value of the goods, i.e., it is fixed based on the ad-valorem, with rates set out in the Customs Tariff Act, 1975.
- There is no specific rate of BCD, and it can vary on the basis of the country of origin and the types of goods being imported.
- The Central Government holds the power to exempt specific goods from BCD.
- Purpose:
 - It protects domestic manufacturers from underpriced foreign competition by raising the landed cost of comparable imports.
 - It generates revenue for the central government, since customs duty remains a significant indirect tax stream.
 - It also functions as a policy lever. The government raises or removes BCD on specific inputs to support sectors such as electronics, renewable energy, and defence manufacturing.
 - Because BCD applies before Integrated GST (IGST) on imports, it directly affects the final landed cost that a business builds into its pricing.
- The calculation of BCD involves several steps:
 - Classification of Goods: Imported goods are classified under specific Harmonized System (HS) codes, which determine the applicable duty rate.
 - Assessment of Value: The value of the goods is assessed based on the transaction value, including the cost of goods, insurance, and freight (CIF).
 - Application of Duty Rate: The BCD rate for that HS code is applied to the assessed CIF value to arrive at the duty payable.

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EXERCISE VARUNA



- It is the **bilateral maritime** exercise conducted between the **Indian Navy and the French Navy**.
- This year it is the **24th edition** of exercise Varuna.
- **Phases:** It will witness professional **engagements in harbour and at sea**, including cross-deck visits, operational interactions and sporting engagements.
- These engagements will provide opportunities for both Navies to share experiences and Best Practices, **enhance interoperability and foster greater mutual understanding**.
- **Other India-France Military Exercises**
 - FRINJEX** : Army Joint Exercise
 - GARUDA** : Air Force Exercise

Key Facts about INS Trishul:

- It is a front-line **Talwar-class guided missile frigate** of the Indian Navy,
- It joined the arsenal of the **Indian Navy in 2003**.
- It is equipped for **multi-dimensional maritime**

Speed : It has a top speed in excess of **30 knots** and an endurance of 30 days at sea.

Armaments:

- Trishul became the second Indian warship to incorporate **an eight cell KBSM 3S-14NE Vertical Launcher**.
- It was the first to upload the new Indian/Russian designed missile, the supersonic BrahMos PJ-10 AShCM (anti-sub/ship/surface cruise missile).