

INDIA-BANGLADESH CONNECTIVITY PROJECTS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister (of Bangladesh) Sheikh Hasina reviewed connectivity projects involving railway tracks and rolling stock.



About:

- These include the conversion to dual gauge the Tongi-Akhaura line, supply of rolling stock, Kaunia-Lalmonirhat-Mogalhat-New Gitaldaha link and Hili-Birampur upgradation of track.
- Similar works are also on on the Benapole-Jashore and Burimari-Changrabandha lines.
- These multiple rail track projects will create a smooth flow of goods and people within Bangladesh overcoming infrastructure bottlenecks.
- India and Bangladesh have been in talks for the construction of an Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Sirajganj in the north-west of capital Dhaka and help in movement of bulk items.
- The leaders “agreed to expeditiously implement” projects to connect the power grids of both sides through the proposed high capacity 765 kV transmission line from Katihar in Bihar to Bornagar in Assam through Parbatipur in Bangladesh.
- In a separate event, Ms. Hasina awarded the Mujib scholarships to 200 descendants of the Indian soldiers who were martyred or injured in the 1971 war.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN RUPEE

The Finance Ministry was scheduled to meet with stakeholders including banks and the Ministries of External Affairs and Commerce to discuss ways to promote international trade in rupee instead of the United States dollar.



The background:

- On July 11 this year, the RBI issued a circular saying it had decided “to put in place an additional arrangement for invoicing, payment,

and settlement of exports/ imports in INR”.

- The idea, the RBI said, was to “promote growth of global trade with emphasis on exports from India and to support the increasing interest of global trading community in INR”.
- While the move to allow trade settlements between India and other countries in rupees was seen to primarily benefit trading with Russia, it was also expected to help check dollar outflow and slow the depreciation of the rupee to a “very limited extent”.

Way it would work

- To settle trade transactions with any country, banks in India would open Vostro accounts of correspondent bank/s of the partner country for trading. Indian importers can pay for their imports in INR into these accounts.
- These earnings from imports can then be used to pay Indian exporters in INR.
- A Vostro account is an account that a correspondent bank holds on behalf of another bank — for example, HSBC Vostro account is held by SBI in India.

SOLAR-POWERED DRONES

China’s first fully solar-powered unmanned aerial vehicle has successfully completed its maiden test flight with all onboard systems functioning optimally.



About:

- With a wingspan of 164-ft, the drone is a large machine powered entirely by solar panels.
- The high-altitude, long-endurance (HALE) UAV can stay airborne for long durations.
- Named the Qimingxing-50, or Morning Star-50, this drone flies above 20-km altitude where there is stable airflow with no clouds.
- This helps these drones to make the maximum use of solar equipment to stay functional for extended durations.

- The fact that the drone can operate in near-space – 20 km to 100 km above the Earth’s surface – makes it capable of carrying out satellite-like functions.
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EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Plenary Session of 7th Eastern Economic Forum being held in Vladivostok through video conferencing.



About:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that India is keen to strengthen its partnership with Russia on Arctic subjects.
- He said, along with energy, India has also made significant investments in the Russian Far East in the fields of pharma and diamonds.
- The Prime Minister said, in 2019, he had a chance to participate in this forum face-to-face and at that time he had announced the Act Far-East policy of India.

Do you know?

- Eastern Economic Forum is an international forum held each year in Vladivostok, Russia, for the purpose of encouraging foreign investment in the Russian Far East.
 - It is held each year since 2015 in September, at the Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok, Russia.
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CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT WITH NSCN-K NIKI SUMI GROUP

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) extended the ceasefire agreement with the Niki Sumi faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland.



About:

- The MHA said that a ceasefire agreement was in operation between the Government of India and NSCN (K).
- “It was decided to extend the Ceasefire Agreement with the NSCN

(K) Niki for a period of one year with effect from 08.09.2022 to 07.09.2023,” the MHA said in a statement.

- The MHA first signed the agreement in 2021.
- Sumi is wanted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for allegedly planning the attack on an army convoy in Manipur’s Chandel district on June 4, 2015 in which 18 personnel were killed.

INDIA-US 2+2 INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING

India-US 2+2 Inter-sessional meeting was held in New Delhi where the senior officials vowed to further strengthen the strategic partnership between both nations.



About:

- The officials also reviewed the outcomes of the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue which was held in April 2022. The India-US 2+2 Inter-sessional meeting was led by senior officials from the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence and the US Departments of State and Defence.
- This is the sixth India-US 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue.
- Through these dialogues, the United States and India will advance an ambitious set of initiatives across the defence partnership ahead of the 2+2 ministerial next year, including in support of information-sharing, logistics, technology, and high-end navy cooperation.
- Notably, India is the centrepiece of the Joe Biden administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy – Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers recently held the ‘2+2’ meeting with their American counterparts.

NORMS EASED FOR USE OF RAILWAY LAND FOR CARGO, SCHOOLS & HOSPITALS

In News:

- The Central government has made it simpler and cheaper for various entities to set up a range of infrastructure on Railway land on long-term lease.
- These including cargo-related enterprises, public utilities, renewable energy projects and even schools.

Background:

- Private players in the cargo movement business have been requesting the Central government to bring down Railway land-leasing rates.
- Currently, the Indian Railways gives Railway land on lease with annual lease charge of 6 per cent and annual escalation of 7 per cent for the remaining lease period or 35 years.

What Policy changes have been introduced?

- Under the new land policy, setting up of cargo terminals and cargo-related activities on Railway land will attract a rate of 1.5 per cent of current market value of land per annum with a 6 per cent annual increment accounting for inflation, for up to 35 years.
- Through the new land policy, the Central government envisages cargo-related activities to be taken up by any player, be it PSU, Railways, private players, existing and future players.
- Renewable energy plants, water recycling and treatment plants are to be for exclusive use of Railways while social infrastructure like schools and hospitals may be for Railway beneficiaries and the public at large.
- The changes introduced are in line with the one of the key concepts of the **PM Gati Shakti** programme which is to bring all infrastructure and utility projects in sync with each other.

PM Gati Shakti

- The Prime Minister Gati Shakti – National Master Plan was announced in 2021..
- It is essentially a **digital platform** to bring 16 Ministries including Railways and Roadways together for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects.
- The multi-modal connectivity will provide integrated and seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services from one mode of transport to another.

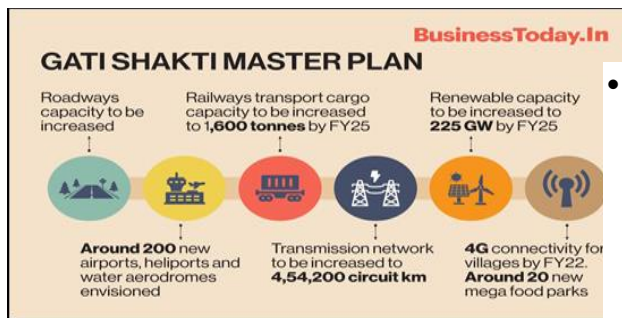
- It will facilitate the last mile connectivity of infrastructure and also reduce travel time for people.

6 Pillars of PM Gati Shakti:

- **Comprehensiveness** –
 - It will include all the existing and planned initiatives of various Ministries and Departments with one centralized portal.
 - Each and every Department will now have visibility of each other's activities providing critical data while planning & execution of projects in a comprehensive manner.
- **Prioritization** –
 - Through this, different Departments will be able to prioritize their projects through cross-sectoral interactions.
- **Optimization** –
 - The National Master Plan will assist different ministries in planning for projects after identification of critical gaps.
 - For the transportation of the goods from one place to another, the plan will help in selecting the most optimum route in terms of time and cost.
- **Synchronization** –
 - Individual Ministries and Departments often work in silos.
 - There is lack of coordination in planning and implementation of the project resulting in delays.
 - PM Gati Shakti will help in synchronizing the activities of each department, as well as of different layers of governance, in a holistic manner by ensuring coordination of work between them.
- **Analytical** –
 - The plan will provide the entire data at one place with GIS based spatial planning and analytical tools having 200+ layers, enabling better visibility to the executing agency.
- **Dynamic** –
 - All Ministries and Departments will now be able to visualize, review and monitor the progress of cross-sectoral projects, through the GIS platform.

- Satellite imagery will give on-ground progress periodically and progress of the projects will be updated on a regular basis on the portal.
- It will help in identifying the vital interventions for enhancing and updating the master plan.

Targets under PM Gati Shakti:



- The **Rs 100 lakh crore national master plan** includes 11 industrial corridors, achieving a Rs 1.7 lakh crore turnover in defence production and having 38 electronics manufacturing clusters and 109 pharma

clusters by 2024-25.

- It fixes targets up to 2024-25 for all infrastructure ministries.
- Implementing Agency: **National Networking Group**
- National Networking Group will consist of experts or officials from all the stakeholder departments.

THE MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR PACKAGED COMMODITIES

In News:

- The Department of Consumer Affairs' Legal Metrology Division recently notified a draft amendment to the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules 2011.
- All stakeholders have been asked to provide public comments on the draft notification.

The Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules:

- **About Legal Metrology**
- Legal Metrology is defined as the legal requirements that are required to be fulfilled for governance over the utilisation of standard weights and for any source of instruments that are utilised for the purpose of measurements.

- The main aim of the Legal Metrology Packaged Commodities Rules, 2011 is to ensure that a public guarantee is being provided for the terms of determining the security and accuracy of Weighments and Measurements.
 - Establishment of standards of weight and measure is included in Union List (entry 50).
 - Enforcement of laws with respect to weights and measures (legal metrology) is mentioned in Concurrent list (entry 33A).
- **Mandatory provisions under the 2011 Rules:**
 - To ensure a number of declarations, such as -
 - The name and address of the manufacturer or packer or importer,
 - The country of origin,
 - The common or generic name of the commodity,
 - The net quantity,
 - The month and year of manufacture,
 - The Maximum Retail Price (MRP) and
 - Consumer care information.
 - All pre-packaged commodities should be inspected.
 - The principal display panel (in relation to a package), means the total surface area of a package containing the information required.
 - All the information should be grouped together and given in one place.
 - The declaration on the package must be legible and prominent.
 - The consumers' '**right to be informed**' is violated when important declarations are not prominently displayed on the package.
 - If there is more than one major product, the name or number of each product shall be mentioned on the package.
 - However, this is not applicable to mechanical or electrical commodities.
- **Concerns:**
 - Many producers, packagers or importers do not properly label necessary declarations or prime constituents on the front of packaged commodities, which are deemed essential to be disclosed in order to protect consumer interests.

- Consumers are misled by manufacturers' false claims about the content of blended foods and cosmetics.
- **The proposed amendments:**
 - The key constituents need to be mentioned on the product packaging, as many blended food and cosmetic products are sold in the market.
 - Currently, manufacturers list the ingredients and nutritional information only on the back of the packaging.
 - As noted in the draft notification, at least two prime components should be declared on the package's front side along with the brand name.
 - Packages displaying key constituents must display a percentage of the content used to make the product, known as the unique selling proposition (USP). However, mechanical or electrical commodities are excluded from this.
 - As the name suggests, a USP is a marketing strategy designed to **inform customers about the superiority of one's own brand or product.**
 - Listing the USP of a product on the front of the package without disclosing its composition percentage violates consumer rights.
 - **For example**, if a brand sells aloe vera moisturiser, then what maximum percentage of the product should be aloe vera, otherwise, the product name is misleading.
- **Earlier amendment**
 - In July 2022, the Department of Consumer Affairs had notified the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities), (Second Amendment) Rules 2022.
 - It allowed the electronic products to declare certain mandatory declarations through the QR Code for a period of one year, if not declared in the package itself.
 - This amendment allows the industry to declare the elaborated information in the digital form through the QR Code.

[COVID DISTRESS: ONE IN 6 MSME LOAN ACCOUNTS UNDER GOVT PANDEMIC RELIEF PACKAGE TURNS NPA](#)

In News:

- One in every six loans disbursed under the **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLG Scheme)** has turned bad in just 27 months.
 - ECLG scheme was launched as part of the Covid-19 relief package in May 2020.
- This was revealed by the information obtained under the Right to Information Act.

In Focus: Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)

- The ECLGS was unveiled as part of the comprehensive package announced by Finance Ministry.
 - ECLGS was launched in different phases - ECLGS 1.0, ECLGS 2.0, ECLGS 3.0, ECLGS 4.0.
- This scheme was launched to aid Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector in view of the economic distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In different phases, the scope of this scheme was increased to include **multiple sectors**.
- The scheme is under the operational domain of Ministry of Finance, Department of Financial Services (DFS).
 - **National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC)** has been set up as a company by the Union Ministry of Finance to manage and provide guarantees to these loans.

Purpose

- The ECLGS aims to provide 100% guaranteed coverage to the banks, non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs) and other lending institutions.
- The idea was to enable these lending institutions to extend emergency credit to business entities that have suffered due to the Covid-19 pandemic and are struggling to meet their working capital requirements.

Different phases of ECLGS

- **ECLGS 1.0**
 - It was launched as part of the Rs 20 lakh crore Covid-19 relief package called the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
 - The scheme aimed to provide Rs 3 lakh crore worth of collateral-free, government-guaranteed loans to MSMEs across India.

- This step was taken to mitigate the distress caused by the coronavirus-induced lockdown.
- **ECLGS 2.0**
- In November 2020, government announced the launch of ECLGS 2.0 by extending the scheme to other sectors.
- It was launched to support 26 stressed sectors identified by the Kamath Committee and the healthcare sector.
- The scheme was valid till March 31, 2021.
- **ECLGS 3.0**
- The Hospitality, Travel and Tourism, Leisure, and Sporting sectors are among those most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Hence, the government on March 31 widened the scope of the Rs 3 lakh crore scheme by announcing ECLGS 3.0 to focus these sectors.
- It was valid till June 30, 2021
- **ECLGS 4.0**
- In May 2021, the Indian government notified the expansion of the ECLGS. This is known as ECLGS 4.0.
- In this phase, tenure of ECLGS was extended by three months to September 30, 2021, from June 30, 2021.
- Also, 100% guarantee cover was provided to hospitals/nursing homes/clinics/medical colleges for loans of up to Rs 2 crores at an interest rate of 7.5 percent.
- It was given for setting up on-site oxygen generation plants.

Impact of ECLGS

- A study by **SBI Research**, published in January 2022, showed that the ECLGS has helped 1.5 crore jobs in the MSME sector.
- In absolute terms, MSME loan accounts worth Rs 1.8 lakh crore were saved from slipping into NPA.