

## NATIONAL

### Start home delivery of rations to curb deaths

To avoid starvation deaths, the Centre has asked the States to begin providing doorstep delivery of foodgrains as part of the Public Distribution System (PDS).

- In a national consultation with State Food Ministers the centre urged the States to implement reforms to strengthen the subsidised foodgrain distribution system, and to work with the Centre to ensure the prices of essential commodities remain stable and inflation was contained.
- As a precautionary measure against starvation deaths, home delivery of foodgrains, especially to the disabled and elderly, should be done as a precautionary measure.

According to Right to Food activists, at least 12 starvation deaths have been reported in Jharkhand over the last 10 months.

### FATF hands 10-point plan to Pak.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has laid out a 10-point action plan for compliance with its guidelines.

- Pakistan's failure in implementing the elaborate action plan may result in it being included in the black list the next year.
- After 2012-15, this is the second time it has been grey-listed and is facing sanctions.
- The country has been instructed to take measures demonstrating that UN-designated terrorists and banned terror outfits such as Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar, Taliban and Haqqani Network, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and their affiliates, are deprived of their resources and their sources of funding are choked.
- The country will have to take stringent action against illegal financial operations, identify cash couriers and enforce controls on illicit movement of currency.
- Improve coordination between the provincial and federal authorities on combating terror funding and enforce effective prosecution and conviction of the designated persons, entities and their affiliates.

## EU leaders reach migration deal

### Why in News?

European leaders reached a deal on migration after tortuous talks, but details were vague.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel conceded that differences remained on an issue.

After nine hours of talks, EU leaders agreed to share out refugees arriving in the bloc on a voluntary basis and create “controlled centres” inside the European Union (EU) to process asylum requests.

They also agreed to share responsibility for migrants rescued at sea, a key demand of Italy’s new Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte.

### **Italy’s demand**

Italy’s Prime Minister had earlier refused to endorse a summit text on security and trade until other leaders had pledged to help Italy manage Mediterranean arrivals.

Although the traffic has slowed in recent years, there are still daily stories of disasters as migrants make the perilous crossing from Africa to Europe.

The EU summit took place in an atmosphere of political crisis, with Ms. Merkel under intense pressure at home to take a firmer stance on migration.

In a final statement, the leaders agreed to restrict migrant moves within the bloc but made clear virtually all of their pledges would be carried out on a “voluntary basis” by member states.

They also agreed to tighten their external border and increase financing for Turkey, Morocco and other North African states to prevent migration to Europe.

## **Need ₹10 lakh cr. to raise steel output'**

### **Why in News?**

According to Union Minister of Steel Chaudhary Birender Singh, India would require ₹10 lakh crore of investment to achieve its target of reaching 300 million tonnes (MT) steel manufacturing capacity by 2030.

- The country had saved ₹5,000 crore worth of foreign exchange through the government's efforts to boost domestic substitution of high-end steel imports.
- The ₹5,000 crore saving had been achieved through an increase in output of high-end steel for infrastructure, automobile, defence and medical equipment sectors. The government's initiatives had reduced imports by 36% to 7.48 million tonnes.
- The goal was to ensure a reduction in India's dependence on other countries.
- India was the world's third-largest steel producer in 2017, according to the India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF).
- The growth in the steel sector has been driven by the domestic availability of raw materials such as iron ore and cost-effective labour.
- India is projected to become the second largest steel producer by 2018 based on increased capacity addition in anticipation of upcoming demand.
- The new steel policy, approved in May 2017, is expected to help boost India's steel production.
- India's crude steel output grew 5.87% year-on-year to 101.227 million tonnes in 2017. Crude steel production reached 93.183 MT during April-February 2017-18, according to IBEF.
- Total consumption of finished steel stood at 81.943 MT during April-February 2017-18.

## **IISc to boost science start-up incubation**

### **Why in News?**

The Indian Institute of Science plans to open a research park at its facility within the next three years to incubate sci-tech companies.

- The Indian Institute of Science founded in 1909 by Jamsetji Tata and former Maharajah of Mysore Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV.
- Currently the Society for Innovation and Development is incubating about 15 companies. The Institute wants to scale it up ten times and the tenders for setting up the facility have already been issued.

### **Corporate collaboration**

The institute has collaborations with companies such as Tata Consultancy Services, Volvo, Google Inc., General Motors, Microsoft Research, IBM Research, Boeing, Robert Bosch Foundation and Pratt & Whitney.

- It also works with the Indian Space Research Organisation, Aeronautical Development Agency and Centre for Development of Advanced Computing.
- Of about 12 companies incubated by the Society for Innovation and Development arm, an inter-disciplinary body, include simulators used for endoscopy, microsatellites to access the Internet at lower costs, a medical diagnostic kit and a superwave technology to extract oil from sandalwood.

## **India's External debt**

### **Why in News?**

India's external debt stood at \$529.7 billion at the end of March 2018, recording an increase of \$58.4 billion year-on-year, primarily on account of a rise in commercial borrowings, short-term debt and non-resident Indian deposits, the RBI said.

The rise in external debt was partly due to valuation loss resulting from the depreciation of the U.S. dollar against major currencies, the central bank said in a statement.

The external debt to GDP ratio was 20.5% at end-March 2018, compared with 20% in March 2017.

## **Flying brain - CIMON**

### **Why in News?**

A science fiction-inspired robot hardwired to assist astronauts, launched from Florida to become the first personal, artificial intelligence-powered companion in space.

- The Crew Interactive Mobile Companion, or CIMON, is an English-speaking droid, roughly the size of a basketball, that will help German astronaut Alexander Gerst conduct experiments on the International Space Station (ISS).
- The aim of the CIMON is to increase the efficiency of the astronaut.
- CIMON will verbally communicate step-by-step instructions to Mr. Gerst during three planned science experiments on the space station's European module.

### **Hands-free process**

Currently, astronauts read these instructions from a laptop, which is an arduous process that a responsive, hands-free companion like CIMON can replace.

The main mission is to support the astronauts with their daily tasks to save time, because time is the most valuable and most expensive thing on the ISS.

Extending astronauts' abilities in space is imperative for future space exploration journeys, like the crewed missions to Mars that are scheduled to take off as early as 2020.

The robot has been described as a “flying brain” by Manfred Jaumann, head of microgravity payloads at Airbus.

### **Sci-fi inspiration**

The concept of CIMON was inspired by a 1940s science fiction comic series set in space.

- CIMON also parallels HAL, the sentient computer in Stanley Kubrick’s movie, 2001: A Space Odyssey.
- There are certain effects that might appear during long-term missions, like the so-called ‘group think’ effect, a behavioural phenomenon in which humans that spend lengthy periods of time in isolation are driven to make irrational decisions.
- Long, isolated groups tend to stop communicating with the ground.
- A robot like CIMON with human-like personalities could help mitigate the disorientation astronauts may feel in space.
- CIMON is among 2,600 kg of cargo that was launched to the International Space Station on Friday, atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

## **TELANGANA**

### **NIN launches nutrition advisor app**

Nutrify India Now ,app launched by the Hyderabad-based Indian Council of Medical Research - National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN).

- It acts as a nutri-guide that would help users keep track of energy balance, while providing comprehensive nutritional information on Indian foods, and common Indian recipes, including calories, proteins, vitamins and minerals.

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- It is authentic since it uses specifically Indian guidelines prescribed by the ICMR, well-researched India-specific databases, Indian foods and recipes and their nutrition information. Other apps draw from databases and guidelines from foreign sources.

Moreover, it makes available raw food names in 17 Indian languages, apart from scientific names and is tailored to providing the most comprehensive nutritional guide to Indian users.

- Wherever required, text information of the particular component is provided for easy understanding.

## **ANDHRA PRADESH**

### **CM showers sops on Asha workers**

#### **Why in News?**

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu announced several benefits to Accredited Social Health Activist (Asha) workers.

- The government would pay ₹3,000 monthly honorarium apart from ₹3,000 incentives to them. The government would also provide smart phones to them.
- About 43,000 Asha workers are rendering their services in the State.
- The decision would cause a burden of ₹156 crore on the exchequer. The government will also give priority to Asha workers while filling up auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) posts.
- Asha workers were playing a pivotal role in public health. Working in coordination with Anganwadis and ANMs, they were effectively implementing Arogya cards.
- Asha workers were taking an active role in creating awareness among public on nutritious food and prevention of communicable diseases.

### **Rythu bima to benefit 10.75 lakh farmers**

#### **Why in News?**

The State government proposes to provide insurance cover under Chandranna Rythu Bima to 10.75 lakh farmers who are not covered under Chandranna Bima.

- The proposal takes the total number of farmers covered under insurance to half a crore in the State.
- The scheme comes close on the heels of the Rythu Bima launched by Telangana government on June 2.
- As many as 39.35 lakh farmers were already covered under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) Chandranna Bima.
- The government estimated that 10.75 lakh farmers were not covered under the PMJJBY, which was aimed at providing insurance cover to people working in the unorganised sector.

### **Salient features**

Under the Chandranna Rythu Bima, the next of kin of a deceased farmer (in the age group of 18 to 50 years) would get ₹2 lakh if it was a natural death. They would get ₹30,000 if the farmer was in age group of 51 to 60 years.

- The accidental death benefit would be ₹5 lakh for those in the age group of 18 to 70 years. The benefit would be ₹5 lakh for total disability and ₹2.50 lakh for partial disability.
- The government would also extend scholarship to the children studying between classes 9 and 12.
- The Praja Sadhikara Survey (PSS) has already been completed for 6.30 lakh farmers out of a total 10.75 lakh. The eKYC has been done for 5.40 lakh farmers, and the remaining are yet to be surveyed.
- The Labour Department would be the nodal agency. The Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) would be the implementation agency. LIC would be the nodal insurance agency.



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- The government is proposing to categorise the farmers into three groups – 18 to 50 years, 51 to 60 years, and 61 to 70 years.
- The Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana (AABY), the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), the PMJJBY, and the State's schemes would be converged to provide insurance cover to the farmers.