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**15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023**

# **WEEKLY** **Current Affairs**

For

**UPSC / RPSC**

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**EXAMS**



- Central Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2023
- Top States on Drug Seizure Chart
- UP Government Partners with Private Firm for Maha Kumbh 2025 Accommodations
- NCERT's Textbook Panel for Classes 3-12
- President Droupadi Murmu to Launch Project 17A Frigate "Vindhyagiri"
- India Overhauls Criminal Laws
- LCS System for Settlement of Crude Oil Transactions Between India and UAE



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## Current Affairs 15 to 21 AUG 2023

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## Central Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2023

The Central Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2023, recently introduced in Lok Sabha, proposes significant changes to the taxation framework under the Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) Act, 2017. The bill focuses on the taxation of specified actionable claims and online money gaming. Under the current CGST Act, transactions involving actionable claims, excluding certain activities, are not considered supply and thus not taxable.

The new amendment expands the scope, imposing CGST on suppliers of specified actionable claims linked to activities like betting, casinos, horse racing, lottery, gambling, and online money gaming. The bill outlines the definition of online money gaming and who qualifies as suppliers. Additionally, the bill mandates registration for foreign entities providing online money gaming in India and proposes a 28% tax on total bet value in online gaming, casinos, and horse racing.

### How does the Central Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2023, modify the taxation of actionable claims?

The bill expands the scope of taxable transactions by bringing specified actionable claims related to activities like betting, casinos, horse racing, lottery, gambling, and online money gaming under the ambit of CGST. Previously, actionable claims, except for certain activities, were not considered supply and thus not taxable. The amendment changes this by imposing CGST on suppliers of specified actionable claims associated with the mentioned activities.

### What is the definition of online money gaming according to the bill?

Online money gaming, as defined by the bill, refers to online games where players deposit money, including virtual digital assets, with the expectation of winning money or its equivalent value. This definition encompasses games of skill, chance, or a combination of both, whether allowed or banned under any law, and includes games offered on the internet or electronic networks.

### Who will be considered a supplier of specified actionable claims under the amended CGST Act?

The bill considers a person who organizes or facilitates the supply of specified actionable claims, including those who own, operate, or manage digital or electronic platforms for such supply, as their supplier. This classification applies regardless of how the consideration for the supply is conveyed or made available to the person and includes monetary values as well as virtual digital assets.

### What changes does the bill propose for online money gaming providers outside India?

The bill mandates that foreign entities supplying online money gaming to individuals in India must register under the CGST Act. This provision expands the reach of taxation to include offshore entities involved in online money gaming.

### What is the tax rate proposed for online gaming, casinos, and horse racing?

The bill suggests a 28% tax on the total bet value in online gaming, casinos, and horse racing. This represents a substantial change in the taxation of these activities and aims to generate revenue from the growing online gaming industry.

### How does the bill address compliance for offshore online gaming platforms?

The bill includes provisions to block access to online gaming platforms located overseas if they fail to comply with registration and tax payment requirements. This measure ensures that offshore entities offering online gaming services in India adhere to the taxation and regulatory framework set by the CGST Act.

## Top States on Drug Seizure Chart

In the past three years, the Border Security Force (BSF) has confiscated significant amounts of narcotics from various Indian states. Data revealed by the Ministry of Home Affairs indicates that Punjab and Rajasthan, situated along the India-Pakistan border, have seen the highest seizures of heroin, while Tripura and West Bengal, near the India-Bangladesh border, top the charts for 'ganja' confiscations. Union Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, presented these findings in the Rajya Sabha, detailing the quantities seized and the trends observed. The report also highlights the





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handover of seized substances to law enforcement agencies for further investigation. Strengthened surveillance measures, including advanced equipment deployment, have been adopted to curb drug trafficking across vulnerable border patches.

## **Why have Punjab and Rajasthan witnessed the highest heroin seizures?**

The significant heroin seizures in Punjab and Rajasthan can be attributed to their proximity to the India-Pakistan border, a region notorious for cross-border drug trafficking. The heightened security focus in these areas aims to intercept these illegal activities.

## **What factors contribute to Tripura and West Bengal's 'ganja' seizure prominence?**

Tripura and West Bengal's prominence in 'ganja' seizures is linked to their location along the porous India-Bangladesh border. The border's susceptibility to smuggling facilitates the movement of narcotics like 'ganja,' leading to increased enforcement efforts.

## **How does the BSF cooperate with other agencies after seizures?**

After seizing drugs, the BSF collaborates with State Police, the Narcotics Control Bureau, and other Drug Law Enforcement Agencies for further investigation. This cooperation ensures that the legal processes are followed to prosecute drug traffickers.

## **What powers do border security agencies possess under the NDPS Act?**

The Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985 empowers the Border Security Force (BSF) in conjunction with agencies like the SSB, Assam Rifles, and Indian Coast Guard to legally halt the transit of narcotic drugs at both terrestrial and maritime frontiers. This empowers them to combat drug trafficking effectively.

## **How are surveillance and technology being employed to tackle drug smuggling?**

Vulnerability mapping and advanced surveillance technologies, such as handheld thermal imagers, night vision devices, UAVs, and radar systems, have been deployed along the border. This technology aids in area domination and enhances the interception of illicit activities.

## **What impact has the integrated surveillance technology had on border security?**

Integrated surveillance technology, equipped with CCTV/PTZ cameras, IR sensors, and infrared alarms, has significantly improved border security by providing real-time monitoring and alerts. This has enabled quicker response times to potential smuggling attempts.

## **UP Government Partners with Private Firm for Maha Kumbh 2025 Accommodations:**

The Uttar Pradesh government has entered into an agreement with a private firm to provide approximately 5,000 special accommodations during the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh in 2025. These accommodations, including homestays, bed and breakfast establishments, and paying guest units, will be spread across major towns and prominent locations in the state. The Directorate of Tourism and Luzern Ventures Private Limited (OGA) have signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on this initiative. The MoU, spanning five years, aims to enhance tourism by offering a diverse range of accommodations. A focus will be placed on arranging accommodations for the massive footfall expected during the Maha Kumbh Fair 2025 in Prayagraj.

## **Why is the partnership between the Uttar Pradesh government and a private firm significant for the Maha Kumbh 2025?**

The partnership is significant because it aims to provide around 5,000 special accommodations, addressing the accommodation needs of the large influx of visitors expected during the Maha Kumbh Fair 2025 in Prayagraj.

## **What types of accommodations will be offered during the Maha Kumbh?**





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The accommodations will include homestays, bed and breakfast establishments, and paying guest units, ensuring a diverse range of options for visitors.

## **Why is the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh considered a major event?**

The Prayagraj Maha Kumbh is a significant religious congregation where millions of Hindu pilgrims gather to participate in bathing rituals. It holds immense cultural and religious importance.

## **Why are the sites of Prayag (Allahabad), Hardwar, Ujjain, and Nasik considered mystical due to the Kumbh Mela?**

These places are believed to have acquired mystical power because drops of immortal nectar spilled during the churning of the milk ocean were hidden at these locations, as per Vedic literature.

## **How does the partnership between the government and a private firm impact Uttar Pradesh's tourism landscape?**

The partnership signifies a commitment to enhancing Uttar Pradesh's tourism by providing suitable accommodations, catering to the diverse needs of visitors. It demonstrates a strategic approach to manage the surge in tourists during significant events like the Maha Kumbh.

## **NCERT's Textbook Panel for Classes 3-12**

India's apex advisory body on school education has set up a 19-member committee to align school syllabus, textbooks, and teaching materials with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for Classes 3-12. Fields medalist Manjul Bhargava, economist Bibek Debroy, philanthropist Sudha Murty, and singer Shankar Mahadevan are among the committee members. The committee, led by MC Pant, Chancellor of the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), aims to revise textbooks for Classes 1 and 2 as well. The NCF recommends significant changes in school education, including bi-annual board exams, a semester system for class 12, and student freedom in choosing subjects. The committee also includes experts from diverse fields, such as economics, education, sports, and literature.

## **How does the newly established committee contribute to education reform in India?**

The committee's purpose is to align school syllabus, textbooks, and teaching materials with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), which promotes comprehensive education reform. This aligns educational content with modern learning goals and methodologies, fostering a more relevant and effective curriculum.

## **What role do prominent individuals like Manjul Bhargava and Sudha Murty play in the committee?**

Bhargava, a Fields medal-winning mathematician, and Murty, a well-known philanthropist, bring their expertise and insights to guide curriculum development. Their diverse perspectives enrich the committee's approach to shaping education content.

## **How will the committee's work impact students transitioning from Classes 1 and 2 to higher grades?**

The committee's plan to revise textbooks for Classes 1 and 2 ensures a seamless transition for students into higher grades. This alignment bridges the gap between early education and advanced levels, promoting continuity and coherence in learning.

## **What are the key recommendations of the pre-draft NCF?**

The pre-draft NCF proposes several transformative changes in education, including bi-annual board exams, a semester system for class 12, and greater flexibility for students to choose subjects like science, humanities, and commerce. However, the final report's detailed recommendations are yet to be disclosed.

## **How does the inclusion of experts from different fields benefit curriculum development?**

The committee's members come from diverse backgrounds, including economics, literature, sports, and education. This diversity ensures a holistic approach to curriculum development, incorporating a wide range of perspectives and expertise.





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## **How does the committee's composition reflect its dedication to education improvement?**

The committee comprises renowned individuals such as Manjul Bhargava, who is a prominent mathematician, and Sudha Murty, a philanthropist committed to education. The inclusion of experts from various fields, along with representatives from institutions like NCERT and SCERT, demonstrates a collective commitment to enhancing India's education system.

## **President Droupadi Murmu to Launch Project 17A Frigate "Vindhyagiri"**

President Droupadi Murmu is set to launch the Vindhyagiri, a Project 17A frigate, on August 17 at the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE) in Kolkata, as announced by the Indian Navy. This frigate is named after a mountain range in Karnataka and is the sixth ship under the Project 17A frigate program. The initiative involves the construction of four ships by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three by GRSE. These technologically advanced warships, inspired by the Project 17 Class Frigates, are equipped with enhanced stealth features, advanced weaponry, sensors, and platform management systems. The launch symbolizes India's commitment to both its naval legacy and the development of indigenous defense capabilities, with significant contributions from domestic firms.

## **What is the significance of the Project 17A frigates in India's naval strategy?**

The Project 17A frigates represent a vital step in modernizing India's naval fleet. These ships are designed to incorporate advanced technologies, stealth capabilities, and indigenous systems, showcasing India's commitment to self-reliance in defense production.

## **Why is the launch of the Vindhyagiri frigate noteworthy?**

The launch of the Vindhyagiri frigate marks a significant milestone in India's naval history. Named after a mountain range, it represents the fusion of India's maritime heritage with cutting-edge naval technology.

## **What distinguishes the Project 17A frigates from their predecessors?**

The Project 17A frigates, based on the Shivalik Class, feature improved stealth capabilities, advanced weapons, sensors, and platform management systems, enhancing their operational effectiveness and strategic relevance.

## **How does the involvement of indigenous firms contribute to the Project 17A program?**

Roughly 75% of the requisitions for components and systems for the Project 17A vessels are procured from domestic companies, encompassing Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This approach fosters domestic defense manufacturing capabilities and reduces dependence on imports.

## **What was the role of INS Vindhyagiri, the predecessor of the new frigate?**

INS Vindhyagiri, a Leander Class ASW Frigate, served with distinction for nearly 31 years, engaging in multinational exercises, maritime surveillance, coastal patrols, and anti-piracy operations. It's remembered as a predecessor that contributed significantly to India's maritime security.

## **How does the launch of the Vindhyagiri contribute to India's naval aspirations?**

The launch of the Vindhyagiri signifies India's dedication to preserving its naval heritage while advancing its defense capabilities. It demonstrates the nation's commitment to technological advancement, self-sufficiency, and safeguarding its maritime interests.

## **Pakistani Senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Named Caretaker Premier**

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's surprise decision to dissolve the country's Parliament, with just three days remaining before the completion of its five-year term, has led to the appointment of Senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar as the caretaker premier. Kakar, a relatively unknown figure in political circles, hails from Balochistan, a province marked by internal turmoil. His appointment has sparked questions about his role, especially as he is set to oversee national elections mandated within 90 days of Parliament dissolution.





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Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, a 52-year-old from Balochistan, is a surprise choice as the caretaker premier. He has served in Pakistan's Senate since 2018 and was a part of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), known for its proximity to the military. President Arif Alvi approved his appointment, yet his relative obscurity raises questions about his suitability for the role.

## **What are the responsibilities of a caretaker government in Pakistan?**

Pakistan's constitution mandates a neutral caretaker government to oversee national elections within 90 days of Parliament dissolution. The caretaker government's primary task is to ensure a fair and credible electoral process, providing stability crucial for economic certainty.

## **Why was Pakistan's Parliament dissolved prematurely?**

Despite being close to completing its term, the decision to dissolve Parliament might stem from ongoing political and economic turmoil. Imran Khan's arrest and conviction on corruption charges, combined with legislative changes granting more authority to the caretaker government, could have contributed to this decision.

## **What impact could Kakar's appointment have on the upcoming elections?**

Kakar's appointment raises questions about the credibility of the caretaker government, given his limited recognition even within political circles. The opposition, particularly PTI, hopes for free and fair elections, crucial for political stability and economic certainty.

## **How might the recent legislative changes affect the caretaker government's role?**

Recent legislative changes grant the caretaker government significant decision-making power beyond routine affairs. This expansion of authority, coupled with the potential influence of the Army-backed caretaker PM, has sparked speculation about broader changes in Pakistan's political and economic landscape.

## **What role does the digital census of 2023 play in the dissolution of Parliament?**

The digital census, hastily approved by the "Council of Interests," revealed a population increase from 21 crore in 2017 to 24 crore in 2023. This mandates the delimitation of constituencies based on population changes before the next elections, potentially causing delays.

## **India Overhauls Criminal Laws**

India is poised for a substantial legal transformation as key legislations are set to be replaced to align its criminal justice system with evolving societal values. The proposed reforms include the replacement of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860 with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), prioritizing offences against the state, crimes against women and children, and murder. Another significant change is the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Bill, which aims to streamline criminal proceedings for enhanced citizen safety. The Bharatiya Sakshya Bill focuses on evidence rules to bolster the reliability of evidence in court. These reforms introduce community service as a punishment and underline the commitment to citizens' rights and justice. The meticulous planning involving legal experts, parliamentarians, and law enforcement agencies emphasizes a balanced approach to reform.

## **Why are these legal reforms significant for India's legal landscape?**

These reforms mark a substantial shift in India's legal framework, aligning it with modern societal values. Replacing key legislations such as IPC 1860 and CrPC 1973 demonstrates the government's commitment to an efficient and just legal system, ensuring it evolves with changing times.

## **What are the main objectives of the proposed Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)?**

The BNS aims to revamp the categorization and punishment of crimes. It prioritizes offences against the state, crimes against women and children, and murder. Moreover, it addresses contemporary challenges, such as terrorism and organized crime, while omitting Section 377, raising concerns about male victims of sexual assault.





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## **How does the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Bill contribute to citizen safety?**

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Bill seeks to streamline criminal proceedings, enhancing citizen safety through more efficient legal processes. It reflects a commitment to safeguarding citizens' rights while ensuring a just legal system.

## **What role does the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill play in the proposed reforms?**

The Bharatiya Sakshya Bill governs evidence-related rules and procedures, which are fundamental to criminal trials. Its modern approach to evidence gathering and evaluation aims to improve the reliability of evidence presented in court.

## **How does the introduction of community service as a form of punishment align with modern trends?**

The introduction of community service reflects a progressive shift in punitive measures. By combining rehabilitation with punishment for petty offences, India acknowledges the evolving dynamics of societies and strives for a more balanced and effective justice system.

## **Why is the involvement of various stakeholders in the reform process important?**

Involvement of stakeholders like Governors, Chief Justices, legal experts, and law enforcement agencies ensures a comprehensive evaluation of proposed reforms. This approach fosters a well-rounded perspective and helps avoid potential pitfalls, leading to a more effective legal transformation.

## **Matangini Hazra and Kanaklata Barua**

The President of India paid tribute to the known and unsung heroes of India's freedom struggle. Among them are Matangini Hazra and Kanaklata Barua, remarkable women who made indelible contributions to the movement. Matangini Hazra, a brave soul from West Bengal, led protests, courted arrests, and ultimately laid down her life in 1942, fighting British oppression. Kanaklata Barua, an iconic figure from Assam, unfurled the Tricolour amidst adversity in 1942 and became one of the youngest martyrs. Their sacrifices epitomize the spirit of the freedom movement. This article sheds light on their extraordinary lives, their resilience, and the enduring impact they've left on the pages of history.

Matangini Hazra was a fearless freedom fighter from West Bengal who participated in various movements, including the Quit India Movement. Kanaklata Barua, on the other hand, was a young revolutionary from Assam who led a procession to hoist the Tricolour during the Quit India Movement. Both women exhibited remarkable courage and dedication to the cause of Indian independence.

## **How did Matangini Hazra's early life shape her journey as a freedom fighter?**

Born in a poor family and married at a young age, Matangini Hazra faced challenges that strengthened her resolve. After her husband's death, she devoted herself to social causes and eventually became an active participant in the freedom movement, aligning with Mahatma Gandhi's principles.

## **What significant incidents mark Matangini Hazra's involvement in the freedom struggle?**

Matangini Hazra's active role in the Civil Disobedience Movement, participation in the Salt March, and her instrumental role in the Quit India Movement highlight her commitment. Her ultimate sacrifice while leading a procession to seize a police station demonstrated her unyielding spirit.

## **How did Matangini Hazra and Kanaklata Barua leave a lasting impact on India's history?**

Matangini Hazra's sacrifice earned her the status of a martyr and led to the establishment of a local government in Medinipur. Streets, schools, and neighborhoods are named after her. Kanaklata Barua's legacy lives on through the Coast Guard vessel named in her honor, symbolizing her enduring contribution to Assam's history.





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## **What do Matangini Hazra and Kanaklata Barua represent in the context of women's participation in the freedom movement?**

Both women exemplify the significant roles women played in the freedom movement. Their courage, leadership, and sacrifices shattered stereotypes, inspiring more women to join the cause. Their stories stand as a testament to the vital contributions of women in India's struggle for independence.

## **LCS System for Settlement of Crude Oil Transactions Between India and UAE**

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have initiated a groundbreaking move by opting to settle their crude oil transactions using their respective national currencies. The landmark transaction will involve the utilization of the Indian rupee and the UAE dirham, representing a notable transformation in the dynamics of international trade. This transformative change is facilitated by the Local Currency Settlement (LCS) System, which was introduced via an MoU signed during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the UAE. The LCS System effectively removes the necessity for intermediary currencies, leading to a reduction in both transaction time and associated costs. This pioneering step is expected to enhance economic cooperation, bolster economic resilience, and strengthen bilateral relations. The system's success has already been demonstrated with transactions involving gold trade. As India seeks to promote its national currency in international transactions, this move sets a precedent for innovative trade practices.

India and the UAE have embarked on a significant shift by settling their crude oil transactions using their own national currencies, the Indian rupee and the UAE dirham. This move aims to enhance economic cooperation and reduce transaction costs by eliminating the need for intermediary currencies.

## **What is the Local Currency Settlement (LCS) System, and how does it work?**

The LCS System, introduced through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), enables cross-border transactions between India and the UAE using the rupee and dirham. It eliminates the reliance on intermediary currencies, streamlining the process and reducing transaction time and costs.

## **What benefits does the LCS system offer to India and the UAE?**

The LCS system brings multiple benefits, including reduced transaction time and costs, strengthened bilateral relations, and enhanced economic resilience. It allows both countries to save on foreign exchange expenses, promoting economic cooperation and investment in local assets.

## **What other commodities have been traded using the LCS system?**

Apart from crude oil, the LCS system has been successfully demonstrated in transactions involving gold trade. A sale of 25 kilograms of gold from a UAE exporter to India was invoiced using the LCS system, proving its viability.

## **How does this move align with India's efforts to promote its national currency in international transactions?**

India has been working on expanding the usage of its national currency in global trade. Engaging in cooperation with banks across different nations, India has established dedicated rupee vostro accounts within domestic banks. This initiative aims to streamline the trading of national currencies.

## **How does this move impact India's global trade standing?**

By adopting the LCS system with the UAE, India sets a precedent for innovative trade practices that can reshape international commerce. This move enhances India's position in the global trade arena and demonstrates its commitment to promoting its national currency.

## **Floodwatch Mobile App**

The Central Water Commission (CWC) has introduced the 'FloodWatch' mobile application, enabling real-time flood forecasts up to seven days. Developed in-house, the app employs satellite data analysis, mathematical modeling, and





real-time monitoring to provide accurate flood predictions. With accessible information on flood situations across India, the app offers user-friendly features including readable and audio broadcasts in English and Hindi.

Data from 338 stations will deliver real-time updates for 23 states and Union Territories. The app's interactive map feature allows users to check CWC Flood Forecasts or Flood Advisories up to 24 hours or 7 days by selecting specific stations, states, or basins.

## **Canalisation of Rivers**

The state of Punjab has recently faced significant flooding due to intense rainfall and dam releases. The region's rivers, including Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi, along with rivulets and seasonal streams, contribute to its water network. Experts advocate for effective regulation of water sources to mitigate flood risks. Canalisation, the process of controlling water flow through channels and structures, is proposed as a solution. While Punjab has major dams and embankments, inherent weaknesses make them vulnerable to breaches.

Canalisation could divert water and manage releases from dams, offering a comprehensive flood prevention strategy. The recent floods, caused by overflowing rivers and local waterways, highlight the need for canalisation to manage both heavy rainfall and dam discharges. Long-term canalisation strategies and strengthened embankments are suggested to avert future disasters.

### **What were the two major causes of flooding in Punjab?**

Heavy regional rainfall and dam releases were responsible for the recent flooding incidents in Punjab.

### **Why are perennial and non-perennial rivers originating from Himachal and Jammu & Kashmir significant for Punjab's water network?**

These rivers contribute substantial monsoon water to Punjab, and their overflow, especially when dams are filled to capacity, poses flood risks even without local rainfall.

### **What is canalisation, and how does it work?**

Canalisation involves regulating water flow by directing it into specific channels, utilizing mini dams, interconnecting canal systems and rivers, and reinforcing embankments.

### **What are the weaknesses of Dhussi Bandhs, and why are they susceptible to breaches?**

Dhussi Bandhs are earthen embankments along major rivers, but their limitations make them vulnerable to breaches, even with moderate increases in river flows.

Explain how canalisation can mitigate flood risks in Punjab.

Canalisation would help manage both local rainwater overflow and controlled dam releases, offering a comprehensive flood prevention strategy.

### **What are the proposed measures for flood prevention through canalisation?**

Experts suggest long-term canalisation strategies along with strengthening Dhussi Bandhs to prevent future flood disasters in Punjab.

## **Continuation of NESIDS and Schemes of NEC**

The Cabinet has given the green light for the continuation of the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) with a budget of Rs. 8139.50 crore for 2022-23 to 2025-26. NESIDS comprises two components: NESIDS-Road and NESIDS-Other Than Road Infrastructure (OTRI), both receiving 100% central funding. Due to government decisions such as merging the North East Road Sector Development Scheme (NERSDS) into NESIDS-Road, new guidelines have been issued for administering and implementing the restructured NESIDS.





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The scheme aims to boost infrastructure in identified sectors, particularly connectivity, in the North Eastern States. Concurrently, the Cabinet approved the continuation of the 'Schemes of NEC' from 2022-23 to 2025-26, allotting Rs. 3202.7 crore. These schemes supplement Central Ministries' efforts and address the Northeastern States' development needs. The new guidelines for these schemes, combined with collaborative efforts, seek to transparently and efficiently achieve their intended objectives.

## **BRICS's New University Ranking System**

Education ministers from the BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—have collectively decided to launch an independent university ranking system. The move comes as a response to criticisms regarding existing rankings and their lack of comprehensive data. During a meeting held in South Africa's Mpumalanga province, the ministers acknowledged the necessity for a reliable and relevant education framework in today's global context.

The initiative stems from an agreement among departmental leaders, recognizing the limitations of current rating methods. Russia's Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education, Konstantin Mogilevsky, highlighted the need for a fresh evaluation framework based on objective, universally accepted data. Representatives from all five countries' Ministries of Education endorsed this idea, emphasizing qualitative benchmarks for the forthcoming rating system.

The BRICS nations aim to address concerns over current rankings lacking impartial data and comprehensive evaluation, prompting them to collaborate on an autonomous and credible university ranking system.

### **Why did the BRICS Education Ministers decide to establish an autonomous university rating system?**

The ministers recognized the need for an accountable and pertinent education and training framework, considering the global landscape. They collectively acknowledged the limitations of current rating methodologies and sought a more reliable alternative.

How does the proposed university ranking system address the criticisms of existing rankings?

The new initiative aims to encompass comprehensive and unbiased data, rectifying the shortcomings of current rankings that have faced criticism for their limited scope and lack of impartiality.

### **What role does Russia's Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education play in this initiative?**

Konstantin Mogilevsky emphasized the need for a new evaluation framework rooted in objective data and universally accepted principles, highlighting the importance of credibility and reliability in the global education community.

### **Why did representatives from the Ministries of Education of BRICS nations offer their support to the new ranking system?**

Ministries from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa endorsed the initiative due to its potential to overcome the limitations of current rating methodologies and provide a more comprehensive, qualitative, and accountable approach.

### **How does the proposed rating system aim to differentiate itself from existing ones in terms of benchmarks?**

The Deputy Minister of Education from China stressed the importance of building the new rating system on qualitative benchmarks rather than relying solely on quantitative metrics. This signifies a shift towards a more holistic and nuanced evaluation approach.

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