



AIR Discussions (August 3rd Week)

ALL INDIA RADIO SUMMARY (15 August -21 August, 2020)

SPOTLIGHT (16 August 2020)

Project lion and Project Dolphin for Biodiversity Conservation

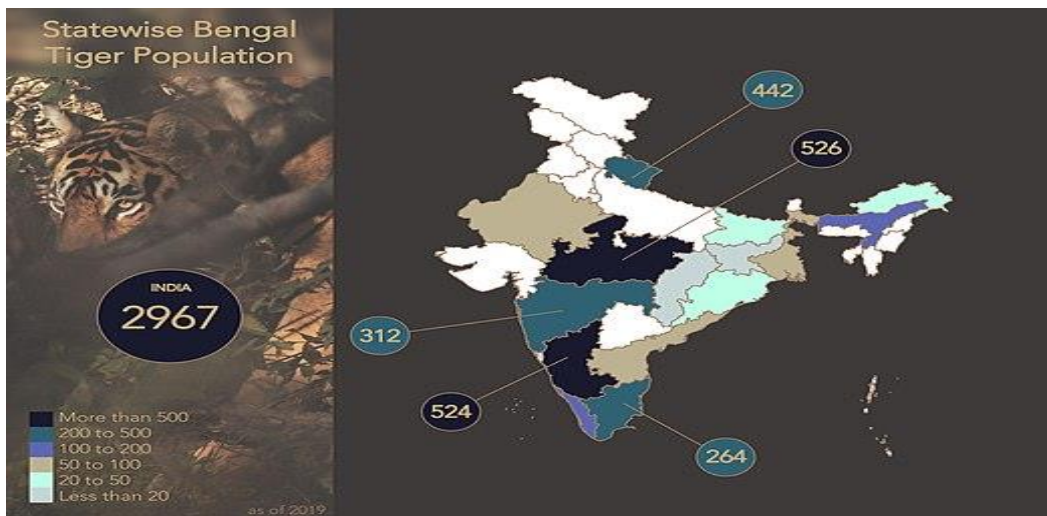
GS-III :Conservation, Government Policies and Interventions.

Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Independence day announced the launch of **Project Lion and Project Dolphin for the conservation of the two endangered species in the country using modern technology.**
- India is showing its commitment for the promotion and conservation of biodiversity and is one of the very few countries where the forest cover is expanding. India has successfully carried forward **Project Tiger and Project Elephant**. As the Tiger and Elephants population has increased in India. On the lines of Project Tiger and Project Elephant, Project Lion and Project Dolphin would be launched.

PROJECT TIGER

- Project Tiger is a tiger conservation programme launched in April **1973** by the Government of India during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's tenure, with the aim of ensuring that the **population of Bengal tigers is well-maintained in their natural habitats**, this project continues to do everything possible to protect and save the tiger.
- The government has also set up a tiger protecting force that ensures there is **no poaching of any kind or any human-tiger conflict**.
- Project tiger was started in association with **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)** and still gets its main funding from them.
- The monitoring system **M-STRIPES** was developed to assist patrol and protection of tiger habitats.
- Project Tiger was administered by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority**.



Project Elephant

- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme**, was launched in February 1992 to provide financial and technical support to major elephant bearing States in the country for protection of elephants, their habitats and corridors.
- It also seeks to address the issues of **human-elephant conflict and welfare of domesticated elephants**.
- The Project is being implemented in 16 States / UTs, viz. Andhra Pradesh , Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand , Karnataka , Kerala , Meghalaya , Nagaland , Orissa , Tamil Nadu , Uttaranchal , Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- The project aims to ensure the **long-term survival to the populations of elephants in their natural habitats by protecting the elephants, their habitats and migration corridors**.
- Other goals of Project Elephant are supporting the research of the ecology and management of elephants, creating awareness of conservation among local people, providing improved veterinary care for captive elephants.
- Project Elephant has been **formally implementing MIKE** (Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants) programme of CITES in 10 ERs (Elephant Reserve) since January 2004. It is mandated by COP resolution of CITES.



SAVE THE TUSKERS

- > Project Elephant launched in 1992
- > The scheme is run by both the governments sharing the fund, where in the Centre takes care of **60%** and state takes into account **40%**
- > The scheme is applicable to **16 states** including Andhra Pradesh
- > India has **32 elephant** reserves
- > AP has only one reserve
- > AP has around **90 elephants**
- > North Andhra has **10 elephants** while Rayalaseema has **80 elephants**

With meagre funds from the government we can provide only drinking water at the RER. These reserve forests can be a boost to tourism too but before that, they need to be developed

Tammineni Chakrapani |
RAYALA ELEPHANT RESERVE

Key highlights:

“Dolphins, are an indicator species, and Asiatic Lions a flagship species”

Project Lion:

- It would involve conservation of the Asiatic Lion, and its landscape.
- It will entail **habitat development by engaging modern technologies in management and addressing the issue of diseases in lion and its associated species through advanced world-class research and veterinary care.**
- The project would also address the **Human-Wildlife conflict**. This would **involve local communities** living in the vicinity of lion landscape, and would also provide livelihood opportunities.
- Under Project Lion, the work will be done on **the required infrastructure** for the protection and security of Indian lions.
- The **Asiatic Lion Conservation Project**, that was launched with a budgetary contribution of Rs 97.85 Cr from Central Government has been extended for next three financial years—FY 2018-19, FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21.
- Project lion will not only entail enhanced finances and duration, but address all the issues required to conserve a species. Which includes using the **latest technology, for health management and holistically providing world standard care, addressing all that is required to conserve this species.**



- Vaccination of livestock, control of cats and dogs in lion habitat, identification of wildlife corridors, improvement of habitat, legal aid, wildlife forensic systems, and attractive relocation packages for pastoral communities were the highlights of this project.

PROJECT LION

Head	Year I	Year II	Year III
Translocation to Barda	54.21	24.21	9.21
Monitoring of Lion	2.24	1.66	0.58
MSTripES Patrolling	1.48	0.32	0.12
Disease Profiling	1.22	1.15	1.15
Other exenses	0.35	0.34	0.34

* Rs in crores

SALIENT FEATURES

➤ **Rs 99 crore** project approved for **lion conservation**

➤ **NTCA, Gujarat forest department** and **WII** to implement it

➤ **Barda** to be developed as **second home for lions** within Gujarat

➤ **40-odd lions** will be **radio collared**

➤ **Maldharis** from **Barda** to be **relocated** and will receive **compensation of Rs 15 lakh each**

➤ **Vaccination** of **feral dogs** and **cattle**

➤ **Samples** from **feral dogs** and **cattle** to be **regularly collected** to test for **CDV, rabies** and other **diseases**

➤ **Samples** from **other wild animals** will also be collected to monitor for diseases



Project Dolphin

- It aims at the **conservation and protection of the Dolphins** in rivers and oceans of the country.
- It involves conservation of Dolphins and the aquatic habitat through the use of **modern technology—specially in enumeration and anti-poaching activities.**
- It will **engage the fishermen** and other rivers and ocean dependent population, and will strive for improving the livelihood of the local communities.
- The conservation of Dolphin will also envisage activities, which will also help in the **mitigation of pollution in rivers and the oceans.**
- It will also give a boost to biodiversity and also create **employment opportunities.** This is also a centre of **attraction for tourism.**



About Asiatic lions

- **Habitat:** They are confined to **Gir National Park and its surrounding environs** in Gujarat's Saurashtra. Five protected areas currently exist to protect the Asiatic lion: **Gir Sanctuary, Gir National Park, Pania Sanctuary, Mitiyala Sanctuary, and Girnar Sanctuary**. In the surrounding sanctuary **only Maldharis** have the right to take their livestock for grazing.
- **Population:** In May 2015, the 14th Asiatic Lion Census was conducted over an area of about 20,000 km²; the lion population was estimated at 523 individuals, comprising 109 adult males, 201 adult females and 213 cubs. In August 2017, surveyors counted 650 wild lions. The 15th Asiatic Lion Census could not be conducted in 2020, as scheduled, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In June 2020, an estimation exercise counted 674 Asiatic lions in the Gir forest region, an increase of 29 per cent over the 2015 census figure.
- **Threats:** The Asiatic lion currently exists as a single subpopulation, and is thus vulnerable to extinction from unpredictable events, such as an **epidemic or large forest fire**. There are indications of **poaching incidents** in recent years. There have also been a number of **drowning incidents after lions fell into wells**.
 - Nearly 85 lions in the vicinity of Gir Forest were found dead in October 2018, they had died because of **canine distemper virus**, the same virus that had killed several Serengeti lions earlier.
 - The Asiatic lion is confined only to the Gir protected area and its surrounding environs. Asiatic lion population is built from a very small number in the early 20th century and thus faces the additional **threat of genetic homogeneity**, which makes the species susceptible to diseases like canine distemper. "It is thus in the interest of long term Asiatic lion conservation that the species be reintroduced to other places in and outside Gujarat"
- **Expert suggestions:** Experts have called for the reintroduction of the species outside Gujarat for the long term conservation of the Asiatic lions. Reintroduction of lions to other habitats apart from Gir



Sanctuary in Gujarat. For example, **Kuno Palpur Sanctuary in MP** is being considered by the ministry for reintroduction of lions.

- **Conservation status:** It is categorised as **endangered** on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List.

Asiatic Lions Fact File

Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*)

Status: Endangered

Found: In and around the Gir Forest, Gujarat, India

Body length: Up to 2.9 metres from nose to tail

Weight: males 160-190kg, females 110-120kg

Lifespan: 18-20 years

Diet: deer, antelope, boar and cattle

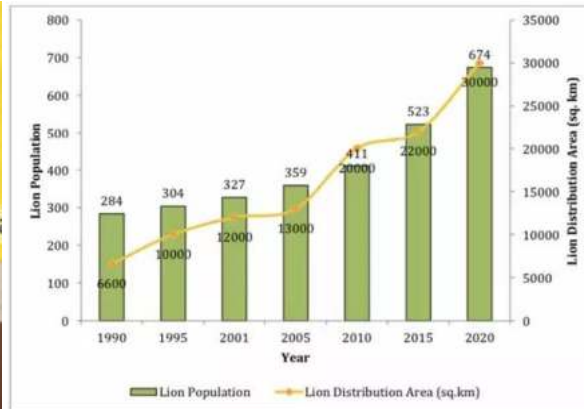


Figure 3: Population and distribution trend of Asiatic Lions.

About South Asian river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*)

- It is an **endangered freshwater or river dolphin** found in the region of Indian subcontinent, which is split into two subspecies,
 - the Ganges river dolphin and the Indus river dolphin (
- The Ganges river dolphin is primarily found in the **Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers** and their tributaries in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal, while the Indus river dolphin is now found **only in the main channel of the Indus River in Pakistan** and active channels connected to it between the Jinnah and Kotri barrages, and in the **River Beas** (a tributary of the Indus) in Punjab in India.



Ranges of the Ganges river dolphin and of the Indus river dolphin

Save Dolphin to save Ganga

The Centre has declared the dolphin a national aquatic animal to save the rare freshwater species from disappearing from the country's aqua map

Know about *Platanista gangetica*

— 1.67 m —

Males grow up to **2.12 m** | Females grow up to **2.67 m**

Females give birth to only one calf, once in **2-3 yrs**

Generally blind, they catch their prey by emitting ultrasonic sound to gauge distance, mass etc

Assam, UP, MP, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand & W Bengal in the rivers **Chambal, Sone, Kosi, Brahmaputra** Prefer deep waters, in & around Indian river confluences

GANGETIC DOLPHIN: A rare specie almost extinct

Lost cousin: The Yangtze dolphin, Baiji, of China

Grim Future Dwindling number due to killing, habitat fragmentation

Once counted in 10's of 1000's, the amount has reduced in last century to **1,500**

"Endangered" & placed in **Schedule-I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**



- The Ganges river dolphin has been recognized by the government of India as its **National Aquatic Animal** and is the **official animal of the Indian city of Guwahati**.
- The Indus river dolphin has been named as the **National Mammal of Pakistan**.

Synonyms

- **Ganges subspecies:** Gangetic dolphin, Ganges susu, shushuk (Being a mammal, the Ganges river dolphin cannot breathe in the water and must surface every 30–120 seconds. Because of the sound it produces when breathing, the animal is popularly referred to as the susu.)
- **Indus subspecies:** bhulan, Indus dolphin, Indus blind dolphin

Distribution and habitat:

- The South Asian river dolphins are native to the freshwater river systems located in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

Ecological importance:

- The Gangetic dolphin is an indicator species, whose status provides information on the overall condition of the ecosystem and of other species in that ecosystem, for the Ganga ecosystem and is extremely vulnerable to changes in water quality and flow.

Conservation:

- International trade is prohibited by the listing of the South Asian river dolphin on **Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species**.
- It is protected under the **Indian Wildlife Act**, although these legislations require stricter enforcement.
- Both subspecies are listed by the IUCN as **endangered** on their Red List of Threatened Species.
- The species is listed on **Appendix I and Appendix II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals**.
- The Ministry of Environment and Forest declared the Gangetic dolphin the national aquatic animal of India.
- **Dolphin Awareness Program** (Phase - I) has been completed. Further strengthening of networking is being taken up in Phase- II with NGOs, schools and teachers in Ganga and Brahmaputra river basins.
- A stretch of the Ganges River between Sultanganj and Kahlgaon in Bihar has been declared a dolphin sanctuary and named **Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary**, the first such protected area.
- **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** in its efforts of biodiversity conservation in Ganga River basin has been working further on the Ganges River Dolphin Conservation Action Plan and has taken up steps to coordinate with various institutions to:
 - build capacity for Ganga River Dolphin Conservation and Management;
 - minimize fisheries interface and incidental capture of Ganga River Dolphins;
 - restore river dolphin habitats by minimizing and mitigating the impacts of



- developmental projects;
- involve communities and stakeholders for sustainable efforts in Ganga River
- Dolphin conservation;
- educate and create awareness and
- Set off targeted research.

Major Threats

- Habitat loss /Degradation / Disturbances – Annual flood, etc.
- Changing River course.
- Inland waterways / Movement of large cargo vessels.
- Various anthropogenic / religious activities.
- Excessive harvesting/hunting/food – subsistence use/ local trade.
- Directed killing/ poaching.
- Accidental killing – by catch/ fisheries related entanglements.
- Accidental mortality – others.
- Water pollution – Agriculture related – on both the banks of River/chemical.
- Water pollution – domestic / direct disposal of sewage / non-functional treatment plants.
- Pollution – affecting habitat and/ or species, Industrial effluents.

The Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*)

- It is a euryhaline species of oceanic dolphin found in discontinuous subpopulations near sea coasts and in estuaries and rivers in parts of the **Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia**.



- Although it is called the Irrawaddy river dolphin, it is not a true river dolphin, but an oceanic dolphin that lives in brackish water near coasts, river mouths, and estuaries.
- The **Chilika Lake in Odisha has emerged as the “single largest habitat of Irrawaddy dolphins in the world”**, following a fresh monitoring survey that pegs the number of individuals of the endangered species at 155.
- Irrawaddy dolphins are classified as ‘**Endangered**’ in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.



Conclusion: These projects will make India a global centre of attraction. It will improve India's image as a responsible environment and biodiversity conservationist nation.

Reference:

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/pm-launches-project-lion-project-dolphin-on-i-day-126914#:~:text=Prime%20Minister%20Narendra%20Modi%20on,the%20country%20using%20modern%20technology.&text=Meanwhile%2C%20Project%20Dolphin%20aims%20at,and%20oceans%20of%20the%20country.>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/centre-to-launch-projects-for-lion-dolphin-conservation/story-r1MGb3SQgFV3Z3GDzCmFIO.html>

<https://www.india.com/travel/articles/project-tiger-everything-you-need-to-know-about-this-initiative-3232921/>

<http://www.wildlifeofindia.org/projelephant.htm>

National news

“ATL AI Step Up Module”

Context: The NITI Aayog launches 'ATL AI Step Up Module' for students on Independence Day eve.

About:

After a successful launch of a unique initiative to take Artificial Intelligence (AI) to schools through 'ATL AI Modules', Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog in collaboration with NASSCOM have launched the 'ATL AI Step Up Module' for students on the eve of India's Independence Day in order to drive AI education and innovation to the next level in schools across the country.

- This module is the next step in bringing AI to Indian classrooms and is a successor to the AI Base module launched in February this year.
- The virtual launch was attended by officials of AIM, NITI Aayog, NASSCOM, Industry Partners and Academia.
- With this new launch, through hands-on projects and activities, the step-up module encourages a deeper understanding of AI which can be applied in the real world.
- Meanwhile, the step-up module needs no previous knowledge and introduces the concepts to students from the basics using interactive tools and activities so as to keep their attention undivided.
- Young India with this get an opportunity to positively explore the module to create valuable solutions which would pave the way for the country to truly become Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

Reference: <http://newsonair.com/News?title=NITI-Aayog-launches-%26%2339%3bATL-AI-Step-Up-Module%e2%80%99-for-students-on-Independence-Day-eve&id=397330>

National Digital Health Mission

Context: PM Modi launches National Digital Health Mission; Every Indian to have Health IDs



Details:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) through this every Indian will have an Aadhar like ID card containing all relevant information about his/her medical conditions and treatments and tests.
- The completely technology based initiative will revolutionise the health sector in India.
- The vision of National Digital Health Mission is to create a national digital health ecosystem, which provides timely and efficient access to inclusive, affordable, and safe healthcare to all citizens.
- The National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), has been rolled out on a pilot mode in six Union territories. Under **NDHM every Indian will get a health ID that will ease access to medical services in the country.**
- The **National Health Authority (NHA)**, which is also the apex agency responsible for the implementation of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana has been given the mandate by the government to design, build, roll-out and implement the NDHM in the country.
- The six Union Territories where the mission has been rolled out through a pilot launch are Chandigarh, Ladakh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.
- **NDHM aims to liberate citizens from the challenges of finding the right doctors, seeking appointment with them, payment of consultation fee, making several rounds of hospitals for preion sheets.** It will also empower all citizens with the correct information and sources enabling them to take an informed decision to avail the best possible healthcare.
- The mission will be implemented in all parts of the country after studying the initial results of the pilot launch.

Reference: <http://newsonair.com/News?title=PM-Modi-launches-National-Digital-Health-Mission%3b-Every-Indian-to-have-Health-IDs&id=397324>

<http://newsonair.com/News?title=National-Digital-Health-Mission-rolled-out-on-pilot-mode-in-6-UTs&id=397413>

'De-Jure' day

Context: Puducherry celebrates its 'De-Jure' day.

More information:

- The Union Territory of Puducherry celebrated its **59th anniversary** of the “De-Jure” day today. Puducherry became independent by **virtue of a referendum** on October 18, 1954.
- But the treaty of cession signed between the French and Indian governments was ratified by the French Parliament only on August 16, 1962. So on that day the “De-Jure” (The Legal Merger of the UT with the Indian Union) was effected.
- The Puducherry administration organized a function at the Keezhoor memorial where the referendum was signed to mark the occasion.



- It may be noted that the referendum was taken on October 18, 1954 on whether to remain in French regime or to merge with the Indian union. As many 178 representatives participated in the referendum in which 170 voted in favour of a merger with India and 8 against it.
- The referendum was taken at Keezhoor near Villianur here and to commemorate the occasion a memorial was constructed at Keezhoor.

Reference: <http://newsonair.com/News?title=Puducherry-celebrates-its-%26%2339%3bDe-Jure%26%2339%3b-day&id=397424>

World's tallest pier bridge

Context: Indian Railways is constructing the world's tallest pier bridge in Manipur

More information:

- The bridge which is being constructed across **river Ijai** near Noney is an engineering marvel because the tallest pier height will be 141 meter.
- It will surpass the existing record of 139 meter of Mala - Rijeka viaduct, Montenegro in Europe. The Manipur bridge is located at the hilly terrain of Marangching village in Noney district, about 65 km west of Imphal. The total estimated cost of the bridge is 280 crore rupees, and it will be completed by March 2022.
- The bridge is a part of Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal new BG line project. The total length of the bridge will be 703 meter. The piers of the bridge are constructed using hydraulic augers, the tall piers needed specially designed "slip-form technique" to ensure efficient and continual construction.
- The steel girders used in the construction of the bridge are pre-fabricated in a workshop, transported in segments and erected at the site by Cantilever launching scheme. A North East Frontier Railway official said, there are a total of 45 tunnels in the project. The longest is Tunnel No. 12 with a length of 10.280 km. This will be the longest railway tunnel in the North East.

Reference: <http://newsonair.com/News?title=Indian-Railways-constructing-world%e2%80%99s-tallest-pier-bridge-across-river-Ijai-in-Manipur&id=397469>

Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)

Context: The state of art quality control laboratory for Sea food export set up at Porbandar in Gujarat.

More information:

- **Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)** has opened a Quality Control Laboratory in the coastal city of Porbandar facilitating tests for seafood processors and exporters. The state of art laboratory will help to **confirm product safety as per international regulatory requirements**.
- MPEDA is a coordinating agency under the **Union Ministry of Commerce for central and state-level establishments** engaged in fishery production and allied activities. According to official release, the set-up, with all support systems for accurate results, has begun efforts to secure accreditation by



National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and the Export Inspection Council (EIC).

- Gujarat has relatively low instances of antibiotic residue in seafood exports, yet a number of cephalopod consignments are rejected overseas due to the presence of heavy metals, mainly cadmium.

Reference: <http://newsonair.com/News?title=Gujarat%3a-Quality-control-lab-for-Sea-food-export-set-up-at-Porbandar&id=397493>

Ministry of Education

Context: Union HRD ministry officially renamed as Ministry of Education

More information:

- HRD ministry officially renamed as Ministry of Education. President Ram Nath Kovind has **given assent** to the change in name of the Ministry of Human Resource Development as Ministry of Education. A gazette notification published and the President had given his nod to change the name of the Ministry.
- The name change was among the key recommendations of the draft new **National Education Policy**, NEP.

Reference: <http://newsonair.com/News?title=HRD-ministry-officially-renamed-as-Ministry-of-Education&id=397563>

'Swasthya'

Context: Govt launches e-portal on tribal health & nutrition

More Details:

- Tribal Affairs Minister inaugurated the **e-portal on tribal health and nutrition named 'Swasthya'**. The portal **provides all health and nutrition related information of the tribal population of India on a single platform**. Swasthya will also curate innovative practices, case studies, and best practices collected from different parts of India to facilitate the exchange of evidence, expertise and experiences.
- It is a first step towards the much bigger goal of serving the tribal population of the nation.
- The Ministry in partnership with Facebook through the Going Online as Leaders (GOAL) Programme. Through the GOAL Programme, the Ministry aims to mentor five thousand tribal youth across India and enable them to become village-level digital young leaders for their communities.

Reference: <http://newsonair.com/News?title=Govt-launches-e-portal-on-tribal-health-%26-nutrition&id=397513>



Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements, 2020

Context: In the ARIIA 2020 rankings, IIT Madras again claimed the top spot for best centrally funded institution followed by IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi. In the category of private institutions, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, Odisha has emerged as the winner.

More information:

- Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) is an initiative of **Ministry of Education**, Govt. of India to systematically rank all major **higher educational institutions and universities in India** on indicators related to “Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development” amongst students and faculties.
- Major Indicators for consideration
 - Budget & Funding Support.
 - Infrastructure & Facilities.
 - Awareness, Promotions & support for Idea Generation & Innovation.
 - Promotion & Support for Entrepreneurship Development.
 - Innovative Learning Methods & Courses.
 - Intellectual Property Generation, Technology Transfer & Commercialization.
 - Innovation in Governance of the Institution.

Reference: <http://www.newsonair.com/News?title=Vice-President-M-Venkaiah-Naidu-says-innovation-should-become-people%E2%80%99s-movement&id=397551>

Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyana Yojna

Context: Centre eases norms to offer 50 pct of salary for three months as unemployment allowance to workers covered under ESIC

More information:

- The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) relaxed norms to pay 50 per cent of average wages of three months as unemployment benefit between March 24 and December 31 this year in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana** is a welfare measure being implemented by the **Employee's State Insurance (ESI) Corporation**. It offers cash **compensation to insured persons when they are rendered unemployed**.
- The Scheme was introduced w.e.f. 01-07-2018. The scheme is implemented on pilot basis for a period of two years initially.
- The scheme provides relief to the extent of 25% of the average per day earning during the previous four contribution periods (total earning during the four contribution period/730) to be paid up to maximum 90 days of unemployment once in lifetime of the Insured Person.



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Academy For Civil Services
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Reference: <http://newsonair.com/News?title=ESIC-relaxes-norms-to-pay-50-pct-of-average-wages-of-three-months-as-unemployment-benefit-in-view-of-COVID-19&id=397819>