



Accessible Elections

The [Election Commission of India's Accessible Elections](#) initiative in Lok Sabha Election-2019 has been successful in making the election process more **participative** and **inclusive**.

- During Lok Sabha Elections special focus was given to ensure the participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwD).

Key Initiatives

- **Facilitation for Persons with Disabilities:** The electors with disabilities and senior citizens were **mapped polling station wise** to provide them targeted and **need based assistance** on the day of poll.
 - **Polling Station:** All the polling stations in Lok Sabha Election 2019 were equipped with **wheelchairs, ramps, sign language expert, signage** and **transport facility** for the convenience of PwD electors.
 - **Easy Enrollment Process:** To facilitate PwDs during the enrollment process **door to door registration drives** and a [special mobile application](#) was also developed by the Commission for easy registration.
- **Braille Signage on Electronic Voting Machine and Electors Photo Identity Card:** EVMs used in the elections were embossed with Braille signage for the visually impaired voters assistance.
 - It was the first time that **Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC)** with braille were provided to the visually impaired electors.
 - Other documents like **voters slip, voter guide** had braille signage too.
 - **Accessibility Observers** were introduced, who ensured all the polling stations are accessible to PwDs.
- **Assured Minimum Facilities**
 - **Basic Minimum Facilities:** For the convenience and facilitation of voters, polling stations were equipped with clean drinking water, adequate furniture for voters in the queue, shed, and toilets for the voters.
 - **Medical Aid:** Facilities like medical aid with basic supplies were also provided on the day of poll.
- **Special Initiatives by State Chief Executive Officers:** Other than nationwide initiatives states in mountainous and hilly terrains of Uttarakhand, Himachal, J&K launched **Divyang Sarathi** and **Divyang Dolis for PwDs** and senior citizens.

Other Initiatives

- The Government of India enacted [Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016](#).
- **Recently, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD),** Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has created ["7th Guinness Book of World Record"](#) for implanting **'Modern Artificial Limbs (Legs)' on 260 Divyangjans within eight hours**.
- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment organised Regional Conference on ["Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme \(DDRS\)"](#) in Mumbai.
- Government of India introduced [Indian Sign Language dictionary](#) for hearing impaired

individuals.

[Source: PIB](#)

Iconic Tourist Sites

The government will develop **17 “Iconic Tourist Sites”** in the country as a world **class tourist destinations** which in turn would serve as a model for other tourism sites.

“Iconic Tourist Sites” Initiative

- **The Tourism Ministry is the nodal ministry** for the implementation of the initiative.
- The **17 sites** identified by the Ministry are:
 - [Taj Mahal](#) and Fatehpur Sikri (Uttar Pradesh),
 - Ajanta & Ellora (Maharashtra),
 - Humayun’s Tomb, Red Fort and Qutub Minar (Delhi),
 - Colva (Goa),
 - Amer Fort (Rajasthan),
 - Somnath and [Dholavira](#) (Gujarat),
 - [Khajuraho](#) (Madhya Pradesh),
 - [Hampi](#) (Karnataka),
 - Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu),
 - [Kaziranga](#) (Assam),
 - Kumarakom (Kerala) and
 - The Mahabodhi Temple (Bihar)
- The initiative is aimed at **enhancing India’s [soft power](#)**.
- **Vision:** The Ministry shall be developing the sites in a holistic manner with a focus on issues concerning connectivity to the destination, better facilities/experience for the tourists at the site, skill development, involvement of local community, promotion & branding and by **bringing in private investment**.
- **Execution:** The monuments taken up for development under the initiative fall under the jurisdiction of [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) and State Archaeology Departments. The Ministry will carry out interventions at these monuments in collaboration with the ASI and State Government, and all development plans will have elements of universal accessibility, cleanliness at the monuments, use of Green Technology and enhanced security for the tourists.

Need of the Initiative

- As per the [latest Economic Survey](#), the [tourism](#) sector witnessed a **sharp slowdown in the year 2018**.
 - The growth rate of Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTA) declined from 14.2% in 2017-18 to 2.1% in 2018-19, year on year basis.
- The Survey also showed that the Foreign Direct Investment (**FDI**) in hotel and tourism declined from \$1,132 million in 2017-18 to \$1,076 million in 2018-19.
- **Low momentum under ‘Adopt a Heritage’ scheme:** Many of the identified monuments were opened up for adoption in late 2017 under the Ministry of Tourism’s [Adopt a Heritage scheme](#). It seems that the momentum of the scheme has slowed down as only 11 MoUs have been signed so far.
 - The Red Fort was adopted by the Dalmia Group, while the Qutub Minar and the Ajanta Caves were adopted by YatraOnline.

- **Financial Issue:** The Tourism Ministry has been allocated Rs 1,378 crore for 2019-20 for the development of tourism infrastructure. This is only marginally more than the allocations in 2017-18 (Rs 1,151 crore) and 2018-19 (Rs 1,330 crore).

Way Forward

- There is a need to **strengthen the coordination mechanism** of various Ministries and stakeholders to resolve issues in the promotion of tourism in the country.
- The **State governments also need to be sensitized** about tourism being a major driver of employment and poverty alleviation in the country.

[Source: IE](#)

Eruption on Mount Etna

Recently, Mount Etna in Sicily (Italy) has erupted. It spewed a plume of ash and lava as two fractures opened at the base of its crater (a bowl-shaped depression, or hollowed-out area, produced by the impact of volcanic activity).

- Eruptions of Etna follow a variety of patterns. Most occur at the summit, where there are currently (as of 2019) **five distinct craters**.
- Other eruptions occur on the flanks, which have more than 300 vents, ranging in size from small holes in the ground to large craters hundreds of metres across.

Mount Etna

- Mount Etna is the highest Mediterranean island mountain and the most active **stratovolcano** in the world. It is about 3,326 metres high and is the highest peak in Italy South of the Alps.
- The eruptive history of the volcano can be traced back 500,000 years and at least 2,700 years of this activity has been documented.
- The almost continuous eruptive activity of Mount Etna continues to influence volcanology, geophysics and other Earth science disciplines.
- The volcano also supports important terrestrial ecosystems including endemic flora and fauna and its activity makes it a natural laboratory for the study of ecological and biological processes.

Volcano

- **A volcano** is an opening on the surface of a planet or moon that allows material warmer than its surroundings to escape from its interior.
- When this material escapes, it causes an eruption. An eruption can be explosive, sending material high into the sky. Or it can be calmer, with gentle flows of material.

On Earth, the erupted material can be liquid rock ("lava" when it's on the surface, "magma" when it's underground), ash, cinders, and/or gas. There are three reasons why magma might rise and cause eruptions onto Earth's surface -

- Magma can rise when pieces of Earth's crust called **tectonic plates slowly move away from each other**. The magma rises up to fill in the space. When this happens underwater volcanoes can form.
- Magma also rises when these **tectonic plates move toward each other**. When this happens, part of Earth's crust can be forced deep into its interior. The high heat and pressure cause the crust to melt and rise as magma.
- A final way that magma rises is over **hot spots**. Hot spots are the hot areas inside of Earth. These

areas heat up magma. The magma becomes less dense. When it is less dense it rises. Each of the reasons for rising magma are a bit different, but each can form volcanoes.



[Source: TH](#)

Microdots Technology

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a **draft notification to make microdots mandatory** in vehicles.

- The draft rules **amend the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989** and allow motor vehicles and their parts to be affixed with permanent and nearly invisible microdots that can be read physically with a microscope and identified with ultraviolet light.
- The microdots would have to comply with the Automotive Industry Standard- 155 (**AIS 155**) requirements.
 - The Standards are **developed by the Automotive Industry Standards Committee (AISC)** set up under Central Motor Vehicles Rules - Technical Standing Committee (CMVR-TSC) by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways.
- Microdots are a globally proven technology to ensure originality in spare parts of machines and components, including in the automobile sector.
 - The microdot technology involves **spraying thousands of microscopic dots** onto vehicles or other assets to form a **unique identification**.

- Each microdot carries this identification which is registered to the owner, but is not visible to the naked eye.
- **South Africa** has made it a legal requirement to have microdots fitted to all new vehicles sold since September 2012.
- The move is aimed at making India **free from vehicle thefts and spurious spare parts**.
 - The government has envisaged that with microdots becoming a permanent feature in vehicles, identifying them would become easier in case they are stolen.
 - Annually about 2.14 lakh vehicles are stolen across the country with Delhi topping the list at 38,644 in 2016, which translates to over 100 vehicles daily, followed by UP (34,480) and Maharashtra (22,435).
 - The move will ensure that consumers have a way of identifying original parts from fake ones and that contributes to overall safety as well.

[Source: IE](#)

New Tool to Reduce Maternal Mortality

The use of **Non-pneumatic Anti- Shock garment (NASG)** controls blood loss due to postpartum haemorrhage (PPH), thus saving the lives of new mothers.

- Postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) leads to **continuous and excessive bleeding**. The rapid loss of blood because of PPH reduces the body's blood pressure and can even cause death.
- The NASG applies pressure to the lower body and abdomen, thereby forcing the blood that was getting accumulated in the pelvic area to other essential organs of the body. Thus, NASG quickly **stabilizes patient** and gives enough time to doctors for treatment.
- NASG is part of a local initiative named **Sahara**, by the district's development officer (Arun Mahesh Babu) of **Ahmedabad district in Gujarat**. The officer has started the initiative in November 2018.
- While there were 8 maternal deaths in the district because of PPH between January and November 2018, since the introduction of this initiative there have been **no PPH deaths**.
 - A lot of mothers were **anaemic** in the Ahmedabad district because of **poor nutrition**. This weakness compounds the damage caused by **excessive and sudden bleeding**.
 - Moreover, women **delivering children in rural areas** are far away from district hospitals when such complications occur. Data showed that almost 30% of maternal deaths in the state were because of PPH and these primarily took place within the first 4 to 24 hours after childbirth.
- Today, 40 PHCs (Primary Health Care Centres) in Ahmedabad have an NASG suit each - each suit can be used 140 times - and the government has spent Rs 14,500 per suit under the **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK)**.

Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK)

- The Government of India has launched Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK) on 1st June, 2011.
- It is an initiative to provide completely free and cashless services to pregnant women including normal deliveries and caesarean operations and sick newborn (up to 30 days after birth) in Government health institutions in both rural & urban areas.
- It will motivate those who still choose to deliver at their homes to opt for institutional deliveries.
- According to **Sample Registration System** results of 2016-17, Gujarat's **IMR** (per 1,000 live births) was 30 and **MMR** (per 100,000 live births) was 91 — better than the national averages but

quite high for a relatively more prosperous state.

[Source: IE](#)

India Plans for Battery Storage Plant

The Government of India will invest around \$4 billion to set up at least four Tesla-style Gigafactories for battery production.

- The initiative is part of Government's plan to transition to electric vehicles, cut down pollution and reduce dependency on foreign oil imports.

Background

- In [Union Budget 2019](#), the Government announced tax waivers for setting up mega-manufacturing plants for solar photovoltaic cells, lithium storage batteries and solar electric charging infrastructure.
- According to [NITI Aayog](#), India will need 6 gigawatt-scale facilities with each having 10 GWh capacity by 2025 and 12 by 2030 to cater the domestic demand.

How the move will benefit India?

- It will secure India's energy needs.
- It will enable India to develop an [electric vehicle](#) ecosystem.
- It will reduce India's import bill on batteries as well as on fuel.
- It will be helpful in containing pollution by promoting clean energy and will help India to achieve its INDC targets.

Challenges for India

- Financial viability of project.
- Technological barriers.
- Lack of stable policy for Electric Vehicle.
- Enabling infrastructural issues like land acquisition.

Recently, the Government has also launched the [National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage](#) to drive mobility solutions and **promote clean, connected, shared, sustainable and holistic mobility initiatives.**

[Source: Livemint](#)

Integrated Battle Groups

- In order to modernise and [reform the Army](#), Indian Army is planning to raise **Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs)** along the borders with Pakistan that will help it carry out swift strikes in case of war.

Background

- After the Parliament terrorist attack(2001), Indian Army undertook massive mobilisation of troops but it lost the element of surprise due to delay.
- Therefore, to launch swift offensive mobilisation of troops, Indian Army formulated the **proactive doctrine** of **“Cold Start”** in 2004, but its existence was consistently denied in the past. In 2017, it was acknowledged for the first time by General Vipin Rawat.

Integrated Battle Groups

What are Integrated Battle Groups?

▪ IBGs are brigade – sized, agile, self-sufficient combat formations

▪ Each of them is tailor-made based on Threat, Terrain & Task. Resources will be allotted based on the three T's

▪ They will be able to

mobilise within 12 – 48 hrs based on the location

▪ Concept of IBG pilot-tested by 9 Corps. They are reorganising based on the feedback and will be restructured by August end

▪ Army will approach Centre for sanction after that



- It will be formed by integrating the existing elements of infantry, tank regiments, artillery, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles(UAVs), engineers and signals.
- It will have six battalions of infantry, armoured and artillery, commanded by Major General or Brigadier.

[Source: The Hindu](#)

White Tea

The **Golokpur tea estate** in **Unakoti** district of **Tripura** set a record for selling maximum quantity of white tea.

- White tea (minimally processed) is harvested even before the plants leaves unfurl fully with the buds still covered by fine white hairs, hence, the name white .
- India accounts for 14% of global tea exports and nearly 20% of the tea produced in the country is exported, according to Tea Board India.

India and Tea Production

- The **largest consumer** of tea in the world
- The **second largest producer** of tea in the world
- The **fourth largest exporter** of tea in the world

Tea Cultivation

- Tea cultivation and plantation is practiced in Assam, Darjeeling, Nilgiri Hills of South India and Tarai along the foothills of the Himalayas .

Conditions of Growth

- **Climate:** Tea is a tropical and sub-tropical plant and grows well in **hot** and **humid climate**.
- **Temperature:** The ideal temperature for its growth is **20°-30°C** and temperatures above 35°C and below 10°C are harmful for the bush.
- **Rainfall:** It requires **150-300 cm** annual rainfall which should be well distributed throughout the year.
- **Soil:** The most suitable soil for tea cultivation is slightly acidic soil (without calcium) with porous sub-soil which permits a free percolation of water.
- Tea is a **shade-loving plant** and develops more vigorously when planted along with shady trees.
- There is a very close relation between climate, the yield and the quality of tea

Tea Board

- It is a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Commerce**.
- The Board is constituted of 31 members (including Chairman) drawn from Members of Parliament, tea **producers**, tea **traders**, tea **brokers**, **consumers**, and **representatives of Governments** from the principal tea producing states, and trade unions .
- The Board is reconstituted **every three years**.

Function

- Rendering **financial** and **technical assistance** for cultivation, manufacture and marketing of tea.
- Export promotion
- Research and Development activities
- Extend financial assistance in a limited way to the plantation workers and their wards through labour welfare schemes.
- Collection and maintenance of Statistical data and publication.

Migrants and Jobs

The 2011 Census data show that much of the **migration** to the big cities is **intra-State rather than inter-State**.

- The Census data shows that nearly 40 percent of Delhi's 2011 population comprised individuals born outside the city, proving that the Capital is a **migrant magnet**.
- In comparison, less than 10 percent of the people in Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata were born outside the respective States.
- Mumbai's share of the migrant population was less than 30 per cent, Bengaluru's just a little over 17 per cent and Pune's just over 10 per cent.

- In the National Capital Region (NCR), Gurugram has about 36 percent of people born outside Haryana.
- In contrast, in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar district, where NCR's Noida and Greater Noida are located, just about 18 percent of the population was born outside Uttar Pradesh.

The Census data also shows that **inter-State migration to the big cities often tends to be intra-regional, mostly driven by migrants' desire to be close to home.**

- For instance, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad have a greater proportion of migrants from the South than from the North.
- Likewise, a significant share of Kolkata's migrant population is from Bihar and Jharkhand.
- However, there are some exceptions. Large outflows from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan to big cities have led to a sizeable presence of people from these three States in almost all the major cities.

[Source: BL](#)

Making India Thyroid Aware

The Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (the professional organization representing practitioners of obstetrics and gynecology in India) and Abbott (multinational healthcare major) have launched '**Making India Thyroid Aware**' campaign.

- Owing to low awareness, more and more people in India are being diagnosed with thyroid-related disorders. Therefore, this campaign aims to enhance awareness of the thyroid as a disease.

Thyroid awareness

- The thyroid gland is in the front of the neck
- One in every 10 adults suffers from hypothyroidism, when the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormones
- Due to non-specific symptoms, hypothyroidism is underdiagnosed. If left untreated, it may lead to serious cardiovascular and neurological complications
- Women with thyroid conditions are at a higher risk of Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome and infertility



- Health experts caution that thyroid may be the new **Diabetes**.
- Over 10% of the local population has a thyroid problem, as compared to 8% having diabetes.
- **Thyroid disease** is a common problem that can cause symptoms because of over or under function of the **thyroid gland**.
 - The **thyroid gland** located in the front of the neck below the Adam's apple is an essential organ for producing **thyroid** hormones.

Common Thyroid Diseases in India

- **Hypothyroidism:** Hypothyroidism, also called an underactive thyroid or low thyroid, is a disorder of the endocrine system in which the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormone.
 - North India recorded the maximum cases of hypothyroidism.
- **Hyperthyroidism:** Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) occurs when your thyroid gland

produces too much of the hormone thyroxine.

- Hyperthyroidism can accelerate the body's metabolism, causing unintentional weight loss and a rapid or irregular heartbeat.
- South India reported maximum cases of hyperthyroidism.
- **Goiter and Iodine Deficiency Disorders:** Goiter is an **abnormal enlargement** of the thyroid gland and the most common cause of goiters worldwide is a lack of iodine in the diet.
- **Hashimoto's thyroiditis:** Also known as **chronic lymphocytic thyroiditis**. It is an **autoimmune disease** in which the thyroid gland is gradually destroyed and over time the thyroid may enlarge, forming a painless goiter.
- **Thyroid cancer:** Thyroid cancer occurs in the cells of the thyroid. The cause of thyroid cancer is poorly understood, but may involve a combination of **genetic** and **environmental factors**.

[Source: BL](#)

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