



Government Aid Not a Fundamental Right: SC

Why in News

Recently, the [Supreme Court \(SC\)](#) ruled that **government aid to an institution is a matter of policy and it is not a [fundamental right](#).**

- **Article 30 of the Constitution of India** (dealing with **rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions**) is subject to its own restrictions being reasonable.

Key Points

- **Aid not a Fundamental Right:**
 - The right of an institution, whether run by a **majority or minority community**, to get government aid is not a fundamental right. Both have to **equally follow the rules and conditions of the aid.**
- **Reason:**
 - Government aid is a **policy decision**. It **depends on various factors** including the interests of the institution itself and the ability of the government to understand the exercise.
 - **Financial constraints** and **deficiencies** are the factors which are considered relevant in taking any decision while giving aid, including both the decision to grant aid and the manner of disbursement of an aid.
- **Withdrawal of Aid:**
 - If the government made a policy call to withdraw aid, an institution cannot question the decision as a matter of right.
 - If an **institution does not want to accept and comply with the conditions** accompanying such aid, it is well **open to it to decline the grant** and move in its own way. On the contrary, an institution can never be allowed to say that the grant of aid should be on its own terms.

Article 30

- **Article 30 (1):** All minorities, whether based on religion or language, **shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions** of their choice.
- **Article 30(1A)** deals with the **fixation of the amount for acquisition of property** of any educational institution established by minority groups.
- **Article 30(2)** states that the government **should not discriminate** against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language, **while giving aid.**

[Source: TH](#)

EC Seeks Deregistration of Inactive Political Parties

Why in News

Recently, the [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) has notified the updated list of registered political parties, seeking [deregistration of parties](#) which do not contest elections, also it raised concerns over misuse of income tax exemption law.

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The Money Laundering Angle

 It is suspected that several unrecognised parties may be engaged in money laundering, given the I-T exemptions they enjoy

The number of registered unrecognised parties increased from 1,112 parties in 2010 to 2,301 in 2019, and now is over 2,700

Although unrecognised, these parties netted ₹65 crore in 2018-19 and ₹24.6 crore in 2017-18

 ADR assessments show maximum unregistered parties in UP and the highest donations going to such parties in Gujarat

Key Points

▪ About:

- There are **over two thousands registered unrecognised parties**, and the EC has sought the power to **deregister (Cancel registration)** inactive parties over fears of such entities misusing **income tax exemption law**.
- ECI also **pushes for a wide range of electoral reforms** to usher in [digitisation](#), removing duplication of voters and enabling [remote voting](#) for [Non-Resident Indians \(NRIs\)](#), even [migrant workers](#) within the country.

▪ Power of Deregistration:

- The ECI is **not empowered to de-register parties** on the grounds of violating the Constitution or breaching the undertaking given to it at the time of registration.
- ECI has the power to register parties under the [Representation of the People](#)



[Act, \(RPA\) 1951](#), but it does not have the **power to deregister parties** that are inactive.

- A **party can only be de-registered** if its registration was **obtained by fraud**; if it is **declared illegal** by the Central Government; or if a party **amends its internal Constitution** and notifies the ECI that it **can no longer abide by the Indian Constitution**.

▪ **Related Concern:**

- It is suspected that **several unrecognised parties may be engaged in money laundering**, given the income tax exemptions they enjoy.
 - The Association of Democratic reforms, a watchdog NGO on electoral issues, has reported that the number of registered unrecognised political parties has increased twofold in the last 10 years.
- **Section 13A** of the [Income Tax Act, 1961](#) has given **100% exemption to political parties** on its income from house property, income from other sources, capital gains and voluntary contributions received from any person however, subject to certain conditions.

▪ **Other Challenges for ECI:**

◦ **Undefined Scope of Powers:**

- There exists a considerable amount of **confusion** about the **extent and nature of the powers** which are available to the ECI in enforcing the [Model Code of Conduct \(MCC\)](#) and other decisions related to elections.
- The code does not say what the ECI can do; it contains only guidelines for the candidates, political parties, and the governments.

◦ **No Legal Backing of MCC:**

- MCC is framed on the basis of a consensus among political parties, it has **not been given any legal backing**.
- However, it does not have statutory value, and it is enforced only by the moral and constitutional authority of the EC.

◦ **Transfer of Officials:**

- One of the major concerns is the abrupt transfer of senior officials working under State governments by an order of the commission.
- The transfer of officials is governed by rules made **under Article 309 of the Constitution** which **cannot be bypassed by the ECI** under the purported exercise of the power conferred by Article 324.

◦ **Conflict With the Law:**

- According to the MCC, Ministers cannot announce any financial grants in any form, make any promise of construction of roads, provision of drinking water facilities, etc or make any ad hoc appointments in the government.
- However, **section 123 (2)(b) of the RPA, 1951** says that the declaration of a public policy or the exercise of a legal right will not be regarded as interfering with the free exercise of the electoral right.

◦ **Lack of Enforceability:**

- The EC **does not have the power to disqualify candidates** who commit electoral malpractices. At best, it may direct the registration of a case.
 - In the 2019 general election, ECI admitted to the Supreme Court that **it was “toothless”, and did not have enough powers to deal with inflammatory or divisive speeches** in the election campaign.

Way Forward

- The role played by the ECI has bestowed a very high level of confidence in the minds of Indian citizens in ensuring the purity of the elected legislative bodies in the country.

- However, the **grey areas in the legal sphere must be rectified**, so that ECI can **ensure the proper functioning of the democracy via free and fair election**.
- It is time that instead of mere rhetoric over independence of the EC some **substantial change is brought forward for protection of the constitutional body**.
- Additionally, **the Commission has to reinvent its approach** so that the bedrock of democracy doesn't shake at its foundations.

[Source: TH](#)

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

Why in News

Recently, the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission** was launched by the Prime Minister through a video conference.

- The nationwide rollout of the project coincides with the **National Health Authority (NHA)** celebrating the third anniversary of [Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana \(AB PM-JAY\)](#).
- **Ayushman Bharat** is a flagship scheme of India which was launched as recommended by the **National Health Policy 2017**, to achieve the vision of [Universal Health Coverage \(UHC\)](#).

Key Points

▪ About:

- It aims to provide **digital health IDs** for all Indian citizens to help hospitals, insurance firms, and citizens access health records electronically when required.
- The **pilot project of the Mission** had been announced by the Prime Minister from the ramparts of the **Red Fort on 15th August 2020**.

- The project is being **implemented in the pilot phase in six States & Union Territories**.

▪ Features of the Mission:

◦ Health ID:

- It will be issued **for every citizen** that will also work as their health account. This **health account** will contain details of every test, every disease, the doctors visited, the medicines taken and the diagnosis.
- Health ID is **free of cost, voluntary**. It will help in doing analysis of health data and lead to better planning, budgeting and implementation for health programs.

◦ Healthcare Facilities & Professionals' Registry:

- The other major component of the programme is creating a **Healthcare Professionals' Registry (HPR)** and **Healthcare Facilities Registry (HFR)**, allowing easy electronic access to medical professionals and health infrastructure.
- The HPR will be a comprehensive repository of all healthcare professionals involved in delivering healthcare services across both modern and traditional systems of medicine.
- The HFR database will have records of all the country's health facilities.

◦ Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Sandbox:

- The Sandbox, created as a part of the mission, **will act as a framework for technology and product testing** that will help organisations, including private players intending to be a part of the **national digital health ecosystem** become a **Health Information Provider or Health Information User** or efficiently link with building blocks of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

▪ **Implementing Agency:**

- **National Health Authority (NHA)** under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

▪ **Expected Benefits:**

- **Ensure [ease of doing business](#)** for doctors and hospitals and healthcare service providers.
- **Enable access and exchange of longitudinal health records** of citizens with their consent.
- **Create integration within the digital health ecosystem**, similar to the role played by the **[Unified Payments Interface \(UPI\)](#)** in revolutionising payments.

▪ **Concerns:**

- The **lack of a data protection bill** could lead to the misuse of data by private firms and bad actors.
- **Exclusion of citizens and denied healthcare due to faults** in the system are also a cause of concern.



Way Forward

- The NDHM still does not recognize **Health as a justiciable right**. There should be a push draft at making health a right, as prescribed in the draft **National Health Policy, 2015**.
- In addition, the failure of a similar **National Health Service (NHS)** in the United Kingdom must

be learnt from and the technical and implementation-related deficiencies must **be proactively addressed** prior to launching the mission on a pan India scale.

- The standardisation of NDHM architecture across the country will need to find ways to accommodate **state-specific rules**. It also needs to be in **sync with government schemes** like Ayushman Bharat Yojana and other IT-enabled schemes like [Reproductive Child Health Care](#) and [NIKSHAY](#) etc.

[Source: TH](#)

Meghalaya Enterprise Architecture Project (MeghEA)

Why in News

Recently, **Meghalaya Enterprise Architecture Project (MeghEA)** was launched.

- The project aims to **improve service delivery and governance for the people** using the power of **Digital technologies**.
- **Enterprise Architecture (EA)** is the process by which organizations standardize and organize IT (Information Technology) infrastructure to align with business goals.

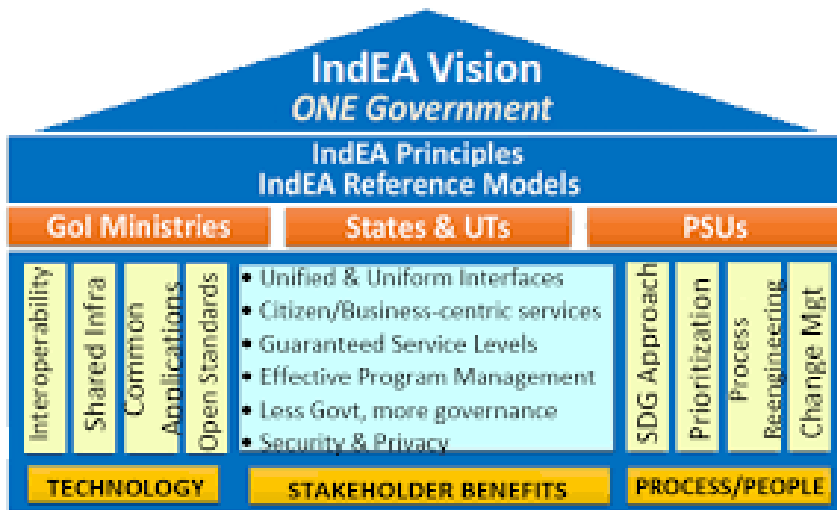
Key Points

- **About:**

- The initiative is **spread across 6 pillars** i.e. Governance, Human Resources, Entrepreneurship, Primary Sector, Infrastructure and Environment, and envision **to make Meghalaya a high income state by 2030**.
- The initiative is in line with the vision of [Digital India](#) that focuses on transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- With the notification of **India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA) in 2018**, design and implementation of integrated, nationally portable and scalable digital platforms have gained a new momentum.
- **India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA):**
 - IndEA is a framework for developing a holistic architecture **treating the Government as a single enterprise** or more realistically, as an Enterprise of Enterprises, which are functionally interrelated.
 - It is a structured combination of several Reference Models that, together, **enable a boundary-less flow of information across the length and breadth of the government** and **facilitate the delivery of integrated services to the stakeholders**, namely, the citizens, businesses and employees.
 - IndEA framework comprises **8 Reference Models**, viz., Business, Application, Data, Technology, Performance, Security, Integration and Architecture Governance.
 - It is a comprehensive and convenient framework for developing Enterprise Architecture to **support [Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\)](#) enabled transformation across governments**.
 - It is a way to establish **Unity in Diversity in the domain of e-Governance**.
 - **Federated Architectural Pattern** is chosen for the IndEA framework for better administrative feasibility, need for decentralization of implementations, on-boarding of legacy/ ongoing efforts of e-Governance and above all, the need for state governments to have the flexibility to build state specific ICT services.

▪ Benefits of IndEA:

- Provide a **ONE Government Experience** to the citizens and businesses.
- Enhance the **efficiency of delivery of services**.
- Improve the effectiveness of **implementation of the developmental and welfare schemes** through a holistic performance management.
- Enhance the **productivity of employees and agencies** through easy access to information.
- **Bring in flexibility and agility** in making changes to the systems to align with the best practices and to leverage the latest technologies.
- **Realize cost-effectiveness** through use of shared infrastructure and services.
- Maintain the **right balance between security of data and privacy of personal information**.



[Source: PIB](#)

PM Speech at United Nations General Assembly

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India (PM) addressed the 76th [United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\)](#).

- The UNGA's theme for this year is "Building Resilience through hope to recover from **Covid-19**, rebuild **sustainably**, respond to the **needs of the planet**, respect the **rights of people**, and **revitalise the United Nations**".
- The PM spoke about a range of topics from the Covid-19 pandemic, threat of terrorism, India's actions to combat climate change and the need to protect the freedom of navigation in the oceans.

United Nations General Assembly

- The General Assembly is the **main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN**.
- **All 193 Member States** of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it the only UN body with universal representation.
- Each year, in **September**, the full UN membership meets in the General Assembly Hall in **New York** for the **annual General Assembly session**, and general debate, which many heads of state

attend and address.

- Decisions on important questions, such as those on **peace and security**, **admission of new members** and budgetary matters, require a **two-thirds majority** of the General Assembly.
 - Decisions on other questions are **by simple majority**.
- **The President** of the General Assembly is elected each year by assembly to serve a one-year term of office.
 - Recently, the [Maldives' Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid](#) was elected the **President of the 76th session** of the UNGA for 2021-22
 - The UNGA has also **appointed Antonio Guterres as the ninth UN Secretary General (UNSG)** for a second term beginning 1st January, 2022 and ending on 31st December, 2026.

Key Points

- **Threat of Terrorism:** The world is facing an increased threat of regressive thinking and extremism and many countries is using **“terrorism as a political tool”**.
 - He also emphasised to abide by [UNSC Resolution 2593](#).
 - The resolution demands that Afghan territory must never again be used to threaten or attack any country or to shelter or train terrorists.
- **Importance of India:** Today **every sixth person in the world is an Indian**. Thus, when Indians progress, it accelerates the development of the world.
 - He regarded India as **‘Mother of Democracy’** and through democracy many socio-economic problems can be resolved.
- **Developmental Model of India:** Citing the [Deen Dayal Upadhaya's Integral Humanism](#), India's developmental model envisages an all-inclusive, all-pervasive, and universal approach. For example:
 - [Unified Payment Interface \(UPI\)](#), [Jan Dhan Accounts](#) have deepened the financial inclusion.
 - [PM Jan Aarogya Yojana](#) has provided the facility of free treatment in hospitals to over 500 million people and has given them access to quality health services.
 - Under [PM Awas Yojana](#), nearly 30 million proper homes are being built for many homeless families.
 - [Jal Jeevan Mission](#) envisages to ensure that piped clean water reaches over 170 million homes.
- **Tackling Covid-19:** India has developed the [world's first DNA vaccine](#). This can be administered to anyone above the age of 12.
 - An [mRNA vaccine](#) is in the final stages of development.
 - Indian scientists are also developing a nasal vaccine against Covid-19.
- **Balancing Economy and Ecology:** India is progressing towards the goal of [450 gigawatts of renewable energy](#).
 - Also, India is set to be the **world's biggest green hydrogen hub**.
- **Ensuring Freedom of Navigation:** Highlighting China's expansionism in the Indo-Pacific, PM held that oceans are the lifeline of international trade and must be protected from the race of expansion and exclusion.
 - In this context, the broad consensus reached in the Security Council during India's presidency shows to the world the [way forward for maritime security](#).

Source: IE

China Questions India's Agni V Missile Project

Why in News

Recently, China has cited a [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) resolution to question India's missile programme amid reports of an upcoming test for the **Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile**.

- **UNSC Resolution 1172** was issued after India's 1998 nuclear tests.

Key Points

▪ About Agni V Missiles:

- Agni-V is the **most advanced surface-to-surface indigenously built ballistic missile**.
- It is a **three-stage, solid fuelled, 17-metre tall missile**, and is capable of **carrying a nuclear warhead of about 1.5 tonnes**.
- Agni-V is a **fire and forget missile**, which once fired cannot be stopped, except by an interceptor missile.
- It has been developed under the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)**.
 - IGMDP was **conceived by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** to enable India attain self-sufficiency in the field of missile technology. It was approved by the Government of India in 1983 and completed in March 2012.
 - The **5 missiles (P-A-T-N-A)** developed under this program: **Prithvi, Agni, Trishul, Nag, Akash**.
- **Agni Class of Missiles:**
 - They are the **mainstay of India's nuclear launch capability**.
 - **Range:**
 - Agni I: Range of 700-800 km.
 - Agni II: Range more than 2000 km.
 - Agni III: Range of more than 2,500 Km
 - Agni IV: Range is more than 3,500 km and can fire from a road mobile launcher.
 - Agni-V: The longest of the Agni series, an **Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)** with a range of over 5,000 km.
 - [Agni-P \(Prime\)](#): It is a canisterised missile with range capability between 1,000 and 2,000 km. It will **replace the Agni I missile**.
- The missile has been successfully tested five times and is in the process of induction into the Army.
- Very few countries, including the US, China, Russia, France and North Korea, have InterContinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM).
 - ICBM is a **land-based, nuclear-armed ballistic missile** with a range of more than 5,600 km.

▪ About UNSC resolution 1172:

- The resolution, in the aftermath of the [1998 nuclear tests](#) that calls upon India and Pakistan immediately:
 - To stop their nuclear weapon development programmes,
 - To refrain from weaponization or from the deployment of nuclear weapons,

- To cease development of ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons and any further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons,
- To confirm their policies not to export equipment, materials or technology that could contribute to weapons of mass destruction or missiles capable of delivering.

▪ Issues in Chinese Claims:

- Agni V has received wide attention in the Chinese press with focus on the detail that the 5,000 km-range nuclear-capable missile **would bring many cities in China within range.**
- While citing the resolution regarding India's missile programme, China has, in contrast, been **aiding the development of Pakistan's nuclear and missile programmes.**
 - China has been providing **enriched uranium and even technology** for nuclear-capable missiles.
- Further, in 2018, **China had sold Pakistan a tracking system** to speed up development of multi-warhead missiles.

Way Forward

- India needs to be far more active in insisting that **a comprehensive nuclear dialogue with China is essential** for strategic stability across Asia.
- **China will be hesitant to enter into such a dialogue**, as it wishes to not formally accord recognition to India's nuclear weapons status, even as it peddles nuclear weapons and ballistic missile designs and materials to Pakistan. These transfers to Pakistan are **in total disregard of China's responsibilities under the Nuclear [Nonproliferation Treaty](#).**
- **India has been far too defensive and avoided exposing the Sino-Pakistan nuclear/missile nexus** in important world capitals. Within Asia, Chinese arrogance would need far closer consultations and **dialogue with countries such as Japan, Vietnam and Indonesia.**

[Source: TH](#)

Herbicide-Tolerant Rice Varieties

Why in News

Recently, the **Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI)** has developed the **country's first-ever non-GM (genetically modified) herbicide-tolerant rice varieties (Pusa Basmati 1979 and Pusa Basmati 1985).**

- These varieties **can be directly seeded** and significantly save water and labour **compared to conventional transplanting.**
- [ICAR-IARI](#) is a deemed university.

Key Points

▪ About the New Varieties of Rice:

- The new varieties contain a **mutated AcetoLactate Synthase (ALS) gene** making it possible for farmers to spray **Imazethapyr**, a broad-spectrum herbicide, to control weeds.
 - The **ALS gene** in rice codes for an enzyme (protein) that **synthesises amino acids for crop growth and development.**
 - The **herbicide sprayed on normal rice plants binds itself to the ALS**

enzymes, inhibiting their production of amino acids.

- **Imazethapyr**, effective against a range of broadleaf, grassy and sedge weeds, **can't be used on normal paddy**, as the chemical **does not distinguish between the crop and the invasive plants**.
- However, the new basmati varieties contain a **mutated ALS** gene whose DNA sequence has been altered using **ethyl methanesulfonate, a chemical mutant**.
 - As a result, the ALS enzymes no longer have binding sites for Imazethapyr and amino acid synthesis isn't inhibited.
- The plants can now **"tolerate" application of the herbicide**, and hence it kills only the weeds.
- It is important to note that, as **there is no foreign gene involved in the process**, the herbicide-tolerance is through mutation breeding. **Thus, it is not a [Genetically modified organism](#)**.

▪ **Advantages of These Varieties:**

- **Direct Seeding of Rice Activity:** The new varieties simply replace water with Imazethapyr and there's no need for nursery, puddling, transplanting and flooding of fields.
 - Water is a natural herbicide that takes care of weeds in the paddy crop's early-growth period.
 - The new varieties will help in [Direct Seeding of Rice \(DSR\)](#) which has several **advantages over paddy transplantation**.
- **Cheaper Option:** DSR cultivation is currently based on two herbicides, Pendimethalin and Bispyribac-sodium.
 - However, Imazethapyr is cheaper than these two options.
- **Safer Option:** Imazethapyr, moreover, has a wider weed-control range and is safer, as the ALS gene isn't present in humans and mammals.

Paddy Transplantation vs Direct Seeding of Rice

▪ **Paddy Transplantation:**

- The field where the seedlings are transplanted has to be **"puddled" or tilled in standing water**.
- For the first three weeks or so after transplanting, the plants are irrigated almost daily to maintain a water depth of 4-5 cm.
- Farmers continue giving water every two-three days even for the next four-five weeks when the crop is in **tillering (stem development) stage**.
- Paddy transplantation is **both labour- and water-intensive**.

▪ **Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR):**

- In DSR, the **pre-germinated seeds are directly drilled** into the field by a tractor-powered machine.
- There is no nursery preparation or transplantation involved in this method.
- Farmers have to only level their land and give one pre-sowing irrigation.

▪ **Advantages with Direct Seeding of Rice:**

- Water savings.
- Less numbers of labourers required.
- Saves labour cost.
- Reduce methane emissions due to a shorter flooding period and decreased soil disturbance compared to transplanting rice seedlings.

▪ **Drawbacks of Direct Seeding of Rice:**

- The seed requirement for DSR is also high, 8-10 kg/acre, compared to 4-5 kg/acre in transplanting.
- Further, laser land levelling is compulsory in DSR. This is not so in transplanting.

- The sowing needs to be done timely so that the plants have come out properly before the monsoon rains arrive.

[Source: IE](#)

Seed Capital Module for SHGs

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Food Processing Industries** has launched the **Seed Capital Module** under [Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises](#) (PMFME) to help [Self Help Groups \(SHGs\)](#).

Key Points

▪ About:

- It was launched on **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission** (DAY-NULM) MIS (Management Information System) Portal for seed capital assistance to members of urban Self Help Groups working in the [food processing sector in India](#).
- The **seed capital portal can be accessed for SHGs** to avail the seed capital assistance.
 - Seed capital is the **money raised to begin developing an idea for a business or a new product**.
- SHGs will be sensitized and motivated about the PMFME scheme **to avail the benefits of seed capital** for purchasing small tools and working capital.

▪ PMFME Scheme

- It is a [Centrally Sponsored Scheme](#) that was launched under the [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#).
- It aims to **enhance the competitiveness of existing individual micro-enterprises in the unorganized segment** of the food processing industry and **promote formalization of the sector** and provide support to [Farmer Producer Organizations](#), Self Help Groups, and Producers Cooperatives along their entire value chain.
- With an outlay of Rs.10,000 crore over a period of five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25, the scheme **envisions to directly assist the 2,00,000 micro food processing units for providing financial, technical, and business support** for upgradation of existing micro food processing enterprises.

▪ Benefits under PMFME Scheme:

- Capital **assistance of Rs. 40,000 per SHG member**.
- **Credit linked subsidy** for capital investment **up to 35% with a ceiling of Rs. 10 lakh**.
- **Credit linked grant** support **up to 35%** for establishing common infrastructure.
- Handholding support for DPR (Detailed Project Report) preparation.
- Capacity building and **training support**.

▪ Other Schemes Related to SHGs:

- [Government e-marketplace](#).
- [Agriculture Infrastructure Fund](#).
- [Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana \(PMMSY\)](#)
- [Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana \(AHVY\)](#)
- [North East Rural Livelihood Project](#).

- [Mahila e-haat](#)
- [Women Entrepreneurship Platform \(WEP\)](#).

DAY-NULM

- It is **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**, launched in 2014, aims to **uplift urban poor by enhancing sustainable livelihood opportunities** through skill development.
- Its intended beneficiaries are **urban poor (street vendors, slum dwellers, homeless, rag pickers), unemployed and differently-abled**. It provides skill training and employment to these people.
 - It also provides subsidies to urban poor i.e. interest subsidy of 5% - 7% for setting up individual micro-enterprises with the loan of up to 2 lakhs and for group enterprises with a loan limit of up to Rs.10 lakhs.

[Source: PIB](#)

Lord Nataraj

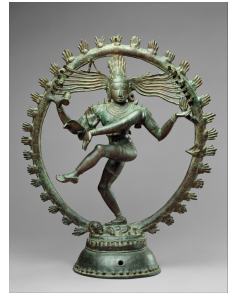
Why in News

Recently, as many as **157 artefacts and antiquities** were handed over to the Prime Minister by the **United States** including a **bronze Nataraj figure**.

- The list has a diverse set of items **bas-relief panel of Revanta** in sandstone made in the **10th century**, 56 **terracotta** pieces, several bronze figurines and copper objects, among others which mainly belong to **11th and 14th centuries**.
- It also includes an **18th-century sword in its sheath**, with the inscription mentioning **Guru Hargobind Singh in Persian**, some **historic antiquities** comprise figurines relating to **Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism**.

Key Points

- **Nataraja (Lord of the Dance)**, the **Hindu god Shiva** in his form as the **cosmic dancer**, is represented in metal or stone in many Shaivite temples, particularly in South India.



◦ It is an **important piece of Chola sculpture.**

- The **upper right-hand** holds the drum, which signifies the **sound of creation**. All creations spring from the great sound of the damru.
- The **upper left-hand** holds the eternal fire, which represents the **destruction**. Destruction is the precursor and inevitable counterpart of creation.
- The **lower right hand** is raised in the gesture of **Abhay mudra** signifying benediction and reassuring the **devotee to not be afraid**.
- The **lower left-hand** points towards the upraised foot and indicates the **path of salvation**.
- Shiva is dancing on the figure of a small dwarf. The dwarf symbolises **ignorance** and the ego of an individual.
- Shiva is shown as the **source of all movement within the cosmos** and as the god whose **doomsday dance, represented by the arch of flames**, accompanies the dissolution of the universe at the end of an eon.
- The matted and flowing locks of Shiva represent the **flow of river Ganges**.
- In ornamentation, one ear of Shiva has a male earring while the other has a female. This represents the fusion of male and female and is often referred to as **Ardhanarishwar**.
- A snake is twisted around the arm of Shiva. The snake symbolises the **kundalini power**, which resides in the human spine in the dormant stage. If aroused, one can attain true consciousness.
- The Nataraja is surrounded by a nimbus of glowing lights which symbolises the **vast unending cycles of time**.

Source: IE

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