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National Time Release Study

The Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, as part of its strategic commitment to improve global trade, is conducting **India's first national Time Release Study (TRS) between 1st – 7th August.**

Details -

- The exercise will be institutionalized on an annual basis, during the same period every year hereafter.
- The **TRS is an internationally recognized tool advocated by the World Customs Organization to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of international trade flows.**

Aim of the study -

- This initiative for accountable governance, will measure rule based and procedural bottlenecks (including physical touchpoints) in the clearance of goods, from the time of arrival until the physical release of cargo.
- The aim is to identify and address bottlenecks in the trade flow process and take the corresponding policy and operational measures required to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of border procedures, without compromising efficient trade control.

Benefits -

- Expected beneficiaries of this initiative will be export oriented industries and MSMEs, who will enjoy greater standardization of Indian processes with comparable international standards.
- This initiative will help India maintain the upward trajectory on Ease of Doing Business, particularly on the Trading Across Borders indicator which measures the efficiency of the cross border trade ecosystem.

KABIL

A joint venture company namely **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL)** is to be set up with the participation of three Central Public Sector Enterprises namely, National Aluminium Company Ltd.(NALCO), Hindustan Copper Ltd.(HCL) and Mineral Exploration Company Ltd. (MECL).

Need -

- The KABIL would carry out identification, acquisition, exploration, development, mining and processing of strategic minerals overseas for commercial use and meeting country's requirement of these minerals.
- The sourcing of these minerals or metals is to be done by creating trading opportunities, G2G collaborations with the producing countries or strategic acquisitions or investments in the exploration and mining assets of these minerals in the source countries.
- The new company will help in building partnerships with other mineral rich countries like Australia and those in Africa and South America, where Indian expertise in exploration and mineral processing will be mutually beneficial bringing about new economic opportunities.
- The equity participation between NALCO, HCL and MECL is in the ratio of 40:30:30

UAPA Amendment

Amendments -

- Earlier, officers of ranks DSP and above were empowered to investigate cases under UAPA as per Section 43. The Amendment seeks to empower officers with the rank of inspectors and above to do the same.
- The Amendment gives powers to DG, NIA to attach properties acquired from proceeds of terrorism. This law does not take away powers of the state police. When NIA takes up a case having international and inter-state ramifications, all the facts pertinent to the case are with the NIA, and not with the state police. Currently, the law requires that NIA take prior permission from the respective state DGP to attach the proceeds of terrorism.
- Those individuals who participate in terrorist activities, aid those indulging in such activities, propagate the ideology of terrorism and members of known terrorist organizations will be declared as terrorists after this amendment is passed.

Home Minister introduces bill to revoke Article 370 of the Constitution

Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah, introduced two bills and two resolutions regarding Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) today. These are as follows:

1. Constitution (Application to Jammu & Kashmir) Order, 2019 {Ref. Article 370(1) of the Constitution of India} – issued by President of India to supersede the 1954 order related to Article 370.

2. Resolution for Repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution of India {Ref. Article 370 (3)}
3. Jammu & Kashmir (Reorganisation) Bill, 2019 {Ref. Article 3 of the Constitution of India}
4. Jammu & Kashmir Reservation (2nd Amendment) Bill, 2019

Announcing a path breaking decision by the Government, Shri Shah said that the Government is moving a resolution which would repeal the provisions under Article 370 of the Constitution of India, which granted a special status to the state of J&K. The provisions of Article 370 would cease to exist from the date President of India issued a notification in this regard, after the recommendation of the Parliament. Consequently, the Constitution of India would get applicable to J&K, on a par with other states/UTs of the country.

Consumer Protection Bill, 2019

The Parliament has recently passed the Consumer Protection Bill, 2019.

Details -

- The bill, among other things, proposes **setting up of a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class. The CCPA would make interventions to prevent consumer detriment arising from unfair trade practices. The agency can also initiate class action, including enforcing recall, refund and return of products.
- The Bill also envisages simplified dispute resolution process, has **provision for Mediation and e-filing of cases**. The Consumer will be able to file cases in the nearest commission under the jurisdiction of which he resides.
- For the first time there will be **an exclusive law dealing with Product Liability**. A manufacturer or product service provider or product seller will now be responsible to compensate for injury or damage caused by defective product or deficiency in services.
- Additional swift executive remedies are proposed in the bill through CCPA. There are provisions for deterrent **punishment to check misleading advertisements and adulteration of products**.
- The Bill also **enables regulations to be notified on E-commerce and direct selling** with focus on protection of interest of consumers.

Relief for NBFCs

For purchase of high-rated pooled assets of financially sound NBFCs, amounting to a total of Rupees One lakh crore during the current financial year, the Government will provide one time six months' partial credit guarantee to Public Sector Banks for first loss of up to 10%."

The details of the Scheme launched in this respect are as below –

- **Name of the Scheme:** 'Partial Credit Guarantee offered by Government of India (GoI) to Public Sector Banks (PSBs) for purchasing high-rated pooled assets from financially sound Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)/Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)'.
- **Objective:** To address temporary asset liability mismatches of otherwise solvent NBFCs/HFCs without having to resort to distress sale of their assets for meeting their commitments.
- **Validity of the scheme:** The window for one-time partial credit guarantee offered by GoI will open from the date of issuance of the Scheme by the Government for a period of six months, or till such date by which Rupees One lakh crore assets get purchased by banks, whichever is earlier.

Competition Law Review Committee Report

The Competition Law Review Committee has presented the **Report of the Competition Law Review** to the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs

The Committee consulted various stakeholders, including industry chambers, professional institutes, Government Departments/ Ministries, NGOs and experts. The Committee focused on furthering ease of doing business, encouraging start-ups and meeting the challenges of the new economy.

Recommendations -

The key recommendations of the Competition Law Review Committee are:

- Introduction of a '**Green Channel**' for combination notifications to enable fast-paced regulatory approvals for vast majority of mergers and acquisitions that may have no major concerns regarding appreciable adverse effects on competition. The aim is to move towards disclosure based regime with strict consequences for not providing accurate or complete information.
- Combinations arising out of the insolvency resolution process under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code will also be eligible for "**Green Channel**" approvals.
- Introducing a **dedicated bench in NCLAT** for hearing appeals under the Competition Act.
- Introduction of express provisions to identify '**hub and spoke**' agreements as well as agreements that do not fit within typical horizontal or vertical anti-competitive structures to cover agreements related to business structures and models synonymous with new age markets.
- Additional enforcement mechanism of '**Settlement & Commitments**' in the interests of speedier resolution of cases of anti-competitive conduct.
- Enabling provisions to prescribe necessary thresholds, inter alia, deal-value threshold for merger notifications.

- g. CCI to issue **guidelines on imposition of penalty** to ensure more transparency and faster decision making which will encourage compliance by businesses.
- h. Strengthening the governance structure of CCI with the introduction of a Governing Board to oversee advocacy and quasi-legislative functions, leaving adjudicatory functions to the Whole-time Members.
- i. **Merging DG's Office with CCI** as an 'Investigation Division' as it aids CCI in discharging an inquisitorial rather than adversarial mandate. However, functional autonomy must be protected.
- j. **Opening of CCI offices at regional level** to carry out non-adjudicatory functions such as research, advocacy etc. and interaction with State Governments and State regulators.

Background -

The Government constituted a Competition Law Review Committee on 1st October, 2018 to review the existing Competition law framework and make recommendations to further strengthen the framework to inter alia meet new economy challenges.

CORAS

Minister of Railways has launched CORAS (Commandos for Railways Security).

Vision Statement -

- To develop a world level capabilities of specialized responder for any situation pertaining to damage, disturbance, disruption of train operations, attack/hostage/hijack, disaster situations in railway areas.
- Following the doctrine of graded response, minimum effective force shall be used for providing fool proof security to Indian Railways and its users.

Features -

- Carved out from motivated and willing young staff of RPF/RPSF.
- With an average age between 30-35 years, CORAS will always be young and motivated staff.
- Very high physical standards to join CORAS.
- Commando Coys shall be deployed in Left Wing Extremism (LWE)/Insurgency/Terrorism affected Railway areas.

India's largest rural sanitation survey

Jal Shakti Minister Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat launched the Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2019 (SSG 2019) in the capital recently.

Details -

- To be instituted from August 14 to September 30, 2019, SSG 2019 will cover 17,450 villages in 698 districts across India and include 87,250 public places namely schools, anganwadi centers, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places, making it India's largest rural sanitation survey.
- Around 2,50,000 citizens will be interviewed for their feedback as part of the survey. Citizens will also be mobilised to provide feedback on sanitation relation related issues online using an application developed for the purpose.

Four new products get GI Tag

The Geographical Indication (GI) under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** has recently registered 4 new GIs.

Products -

- **PalaniPanchamirtham** from Palani Town in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu State;
- **Tawlhlohpuan** and **Mizo Puanchei** from the state of Mizoram and;
- **Tirur Betel leaf** from Kerala are the latest additions to the list of registered GIs.

Details -

- **PalaniPanchamirtham**, an **abishegaPrasadam**, from Palani Town is one of the main offerings in the Abisegam of Lord Dhandayuthapani Swamy, the presiding deity of ArulmiguDhandayuthapaniswamy Temple, situated in palani Hills, Palani Town in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu. It is a combination of five natural substances, namely, banana, jaggery sugar, cow ghee, honey and cardamom in a definite proportion. It is prepared in a natural method without addition of any preservatives or artificial ingredients and is well known for its religious fervour and gaiety. This is the first time a temple 'prasadam' from Tamil Nadu has been bestowed with the GI tag.
- **Tawlhlohpuan**, a medium to heavy, compactly woven, good quality fabric from Mizoram is known for warp yarns, warping, weaving & intricate designs that are made by hand. Tawlhloh, in Mizo language, means 'to stand firm or not to move backward'. Tawlhlohpuan, which holds high significance in the Mizo society, is produced throughout the state of Mizoram, Aizawl and Thenzawl town being the main centre of production.
- **Mizo Puanchei**, a colourful Mizo shawl/textile, from Mizoram, is considered as the most colourful among the Mizo textiles. It is an essential possession for every Mizo lady and an important marriage outfit in the state. It is also the most commonly used costume in Mizo festive dances and official ceremonies. The weavers insert the designs and motifs by using supplementary yarns while weaving to create this beautiful and alluring textile.

- **Tirur betel vine** from Kerala, which is mainly cultivated in Tirur, Tanur, Tirurangadi, Kuttippuram, Malappuram and Vengara block panchayaths of Malappuram District, is valued both for its mild stimulant action and medicinal properties. Even though it is commonly used for making pan masala for chewing, it has many medicinal, industrial and cultural usages and is considered as a remedy for bad breath and digestive disorders.

Aadi Mahotsav

Aadi Mahotsav (National Tribal Festival), a joint initiative of **Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India & Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)** was held recently at Polo Ground, Leh-Ladakh.

Theme -

The theme of the festival is: "*A celebration of the spirit of Tribal Craft, Culture and Commerce*".

Background -

- The tribes constitute over 8% of the country's population. This is a very significant number. In real terms it corresponds to over 10 crore Indians. More than 70% of the population of Ladakh region are tribes. The government has conceptualized of organizing Aadi Mahotsav in Leh-Ladakh in April 2019.
- As the name of this event Aadi Mahotsav suggests, it is the '*adi*' factor that is important about them. The Adivasi way of life is guided by primal truths, eternal values and a natural simplicity.

SARAL launched

SARAL has been designed collaboratively by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation (SSEF), Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and Ernst & Young (EY).

Features -

It was launched during the Review Planning and Monitoring (RPM) Meeting with States and State Power Utilities. SARAL currently captures five key aspects –

- i. robustness of policy framework
- ii. implementation environment
- iii. investment climate

- iv. consumer experience
- v. business ecosystem

Objective -

- It encourages each state to assess the initiatives taken so far, and what it can do to improve its solar rooftop ecosystem. This will help states to channelize investments that can eventually help the sector grow.
- In addition, such an exercise is likely to create a more conducive environment for solar rooftop installations, encourage investment and lead to accelerated growth of the sector.

Sabka Vishwas - Dispute Resolution

In the Union Budget 2019-20, the Hon'ble Finance Minister announced the Sabka Vishwas-Legacy Dispute Resolution Scheme, 2019.

Details -

The two main components of the Scheme are dispute resolution and amnesty.

- The dispute resolution component is aimed at liquidating the legacy cases of Central Excise and Service Tax that are subsumed in GST and are pending in litigation at various forums.
- The amnesty component of the Scheme offers an opportunity to the taxpayers to pay the outstanding tax and be free of any other consequences under the law.

Objective -

The most attractive aspect of the Scheme is that it provides substantial relief in the tax dues for all categories of cases as well as full waiver of interest, fine, penalty. In all these cases, there would be no other liability of interest, fine or penalty. There is also a complete amnesty from prosecution.

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given ex-post facto approval for the Establishment of an International Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) along with its supporting Secretariat Office in New Delhi.

Details -

The CDRI is proposed to be launched at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, USA on 23rd September 2019. Organized by the UN Secretary General, this event will bring together the largest number of Heads of States to generate commitments for combating the effects of

climate change and resulting disasters, and will provide the high-level visibility required for the CDRI.

Impact -

- The CDRI will serve as a platform where knowledge is generated and exchanged on different aspects of disaster and climate resilience of infrastructure.
- It will bring together technical expertise from a multitude of stakeholders. In doing so, it will create a mechanism to assist countries to upgrade their capacities and practices, with regard to infrastructure development in accordance with their risk context and economic needs.
- This initiative will benefit all sections of society. Economically weaker sections of society, women and children, are the most vulnerable to the impacts of disasters and hence, will be benefited from the improvement of knowledge and practice in creating disaster resilient infrastructure.
- It will also benefit all areas with high disaster risk. In India, the north-eastern and Himalayan regions are prone to earthquakes, coastal areas to cyclones and tsunamis and central peninsular region to droughts.

Angikar and e-Course on Vulnerability Atlas Launched

Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs today launched “**angikaar**” a campaign for change management and **e-Course** on Vulnerability Atlas of India recently.

Details -

- In line with the vision of Prime Minister, **Angikaar** has been launched for social behaviour change, focusing on issues such as water & energy conservation, waste management, health, tree plantation, sanitation and hygiene for **beneficiaries of completed houses** under PMAY (U), through community mobilisation and IEC activities.
- For this purpose, the campaign will converge with schemes and Missions of other Ministries dealing with these subjects.
- The convergence would especially focus on **Ujjwala** for gas connection and **Ayushman Bharat** for health insurance to the beneficiaries of PMAY (U).