

PLUTUS IAS



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1. Eight Indian Beaches recommended for Blue Flag International Eco-Label

On September 19, 2020, the Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar announced that 8 Indian beaches have been recommended for the Blue Flag International Eco label. The announcement was made on the eve of the International coastal clean-up day.

Highlights

The eight beaches that were recommended are Shivrajpur in Gujarat, Kasarkod and padubidri in Karnataka, Golden Beach in Odisha, Radha Nagar in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goghla in Daman and Diu, Kappad in Kerala, Rushikonda in Andhra Pradesh. This is the first time the beaches are being recommended for the blue flag International ecolabel. The recommendations were made by an independent National Jury that consisted of eminent scientists and environmentalists

What is the blue flag certification?

It is a globally recognized label that has been accorded by a Denmark based International agency called the foundation for environmental education. The blue flag tag is provided to beaches that adopt the eco-tourism model. It is provided to those beaches that provide clean and hygienic bathing facilities to the tourist or the beachgoers and also to beaches that provide a safe and healthy environment, clean facilities, and hygienic amenities and promote sustainable development of the area.

BEAMS

On the sidelines of the celebration of International Coastal Clean-up Day, the Union Ministry of Environment launched an eco-label of the BEAMS program. BEAMS is a beach environment and aesthetics Management Services. It operates under an integrated coastal zone management project in India. The concept of integrated coastal zone management was introduced in 1992 to during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Several countries have adopted the concept and have India.

The Coastal region is susceptible to litter accumulation. The presence of Debris affects the aesthetic Appeal of beaches and eventually reduces their recreational activities. The BEAMS was launched to remove the debris and promote the sustainable development of coastal regions in India. The program aims to achieve a high International standard in four main categories as follows

- Environmental education
- environmental management which includes solid waste management and cleanliness in beaches
- bathing water quality standards
- safety and security of beach Goa

The Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) operating under the ministry of environment forest and climate change has initiated the process of cleaning the beaches in 13 cities under this program. The program is also in line with the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

2. Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Second Amendment) passed in Rajya Sabha

On September 19, 2020, the Rajya Sabha passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy code (second Amendment) Bill 2020. According to the new amendment, fresh insolvency proceedings will not be started for the next six months considering the Covid-19 pandemic.

Why the suspension?

Due to the COVID-19 crisis the companies are facing disruptions. This has affected their interest payment and loan repayment. The micro small and medium enterprises are the major victims of the current scenario. Hence, in June 2020 the Government of India had increased the threshold for triggering the insolvency process. The Reserve Bank of India had also allowed a Moratorium on all loans till August 2020. In spite of these measures, the number of non-performing assets was increasing. Starting an insolvency process at this point in time would be in effect. Thus, the code has been suspended.

What is the Insolvency and Bankruptcy code?

The code is considered as one of the biggest insolvency reforms in India. It was introduced for insolvency resolution of Corporate persons, individuals, and partnership firms in a time-bound manner.

How is the code beneficial?

The period before the implementation of the code had several scattered laws related to insolvency and bankruptcy. This created inadequate and ineffective results. Some of those laws were as follows

- SARFESI Act: Securitisation and reconstruction of financial assets and enforcement of security interest act
- Companies Act that mainly focused on the liquidation and winding up of a company.
- The recovery of a debt due to banks and Financial Institutions act 1993.
- Ineffective implementation of these laws and their time-consuming procedures forced the Government of India to introduce an insolvency and bankruptcy code.
- The adjudicating authorities under the code are National Company Law Tribunal for companies and the debt recovery Tribunal for partnership firms and individuals.

Highlights of the code

The code aims at consolidating all the insolvency-related laws. Also aims to resolve insolvency in a time-bound manner. According to the code, the evaluation and viability should be determined and completed within 180 days of its initiation. The code also introduced a qualified insolvency professional as an intermediary. Under the code, an insolvency and bankruptcy board was established for the Governance of insolvency and bankruptcy law.

Achievements of the code

After its introduction, the code has helped several business entities resolve from there insolvency. The following are the major achievements of the code since its introduction

- Around 4452 cases were dismissed during the pre-admission stage of the code.
- The maximum amount recovered under the code was rupees 492500 from 21 countries.

3.India to conduct VAIBHAV Summit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is to inaugurate VAIBHAV Summit on October 2, 2020. VAIBHAV is Vaishwik Bharatiya Vaigyanik Summit.

Highlights

The summit is an initiative by Science and technology experts spread all over the world and working in the academic organizations of India. It enables a deliberation on thought process and research and development culture focusing on problem-solving approaches. It will bring out a road map enabling knowledge of Global Indian researches towards emerging challenges.

The Summit is being conducted under the following theme

- To bring Indian luminaries all over the world to discuss and debate collaboration mechanisms with their counterparts in India.
- To bring together diverse academic cultures.

- To strengthen the Aatma nirbhar Bharat initiative.

Key facts

The Summit will bring out a mechanism towards advancement in education and entrepreneurship as elements for sustainable development. The Summit is highly beneficial to non-resident Indian scientists with Global Outlook. The experiences of the scientist with Indian roads will play a vital role in aatma nirbhar Bharat initiative.

Objective

The Summit will bring the nonresident Indian scientists on a single platform. It will help them to debate methods and collaboration mechanisms to strengthen the Science and technology base in the country. The Summit will also add new dimensions to the Atal innovation mission.

Atal innovation mission

The Summit is to seek active support from the Indian diaspora to develop skills of Indian aspirants in line with the new Educational policy. It also aims to provide an impetus objective of Atal innovation mission by leveraging the experiences of International and Indian subject experts

About the Summit

In the current COVID-19 scenario the key factors to boost research and development are complementary expansion, Cooperative development, and interdisciplinary extension. The Vaibhav summit is to work on these three factors. More than 5500 academicians from 500 Global education institutions are to participate in a Summit. Their inputs will play a vital role in making India self-reliant.

4. What Immunization Programme Mechanism will Gol use to distribute COVID-19 vaccines?

The Government of India is to use the Universal Immunization Programme mechanism to distribute COVID-19 vaccines in the country. This was announced by the Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan during his address in the Lok Sabha.

Universal Immunization Programme

Under the Universal Immunization Programme, the Government of India provides several vaccines to infants, pregnant women, and children. This includes Bacillus Calmette Guerin (BCG) vaccine, oral polio vaccine, hepatitis vaccine, Diphtheria, tetanus, and rotavirus vaccines.

The program was launched in 1985. It aims to prevent mortality and morbidity in pregnant women and children against 12 vaccine-preventable diseases. The 12 vaccine-preventable diseases are tuberculosis, pertussis, Diphtheria, polio, tetanus, hepatitis, pneumonia, meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, measles, rubella, and rotavirus.

Mission Indra Dhanush

The Mission was launched in December 2014. It aimed to fully immunize 89 lakh children in the country who are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated under the Universal Immunization Programme. The mission provides vaccination against seven diseases namely whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus, tuberculosis, polio, hepatitis, and measles. The program is also providing vaccination against Haemophilus influenza and Japanese encephalitis in certain districts of the country.

Under the mission, the immunization coverage was increased to 6.7 % per year. Earlier it was 1 % per year.

Intensified Mission Indra Dhanush

The mission was launched in 2017 to reach children and pregnant women who were left out of the routine immunization program being implemented in the country. The mission targeted urban areas which were one of the major gaps of mission Indra Dhanush. The areas under the mission were selected through data that were available under the World Health Organisation, health management information system, and national surveys.

COVID-19 vaccines in India

COVAXIN was the first COVID-19 vaccine to enter into human trials in India. Recently, the Russian vaccine Sputnik V entered into human trials in India. Apart from these two vaccines, the Oxford University vaccine is also under human trials in India.

5.Public Procurement Order, 2017 amended

The Government of India has recently amended the public procurement order 2017. The amendment has been made to curtail Chinese investment. According to the amendment the entities of countries that do not allow Indian companies to participate in their government procurement procedures shall not be allowed to participate in Indian government procurement procedures.

Highlights

- The amendment has been made to promote Make in India and to curtail investments from neighboring countries especially China. The amendment now enables the departments and nodal Ministries to notify higher local content requirements for class 1 and class 2 local suppliers. Earlier the share of class 1

and class 2 local suppliers was fixed at 50 % and 20 % respectively (in June 2020).

- Also, all the administrative departments and Ministries whose procurement is greater than 1000 crore rupees per annum will notify their procurement projections on their respective websites for the next five years.
- The Government of India will notify an upper threshold value of procurement above which foreign companies can create joint ventures with Indian companies in order to participate in government tenders in the near future. The amendment says that a threshold is to be fixed.

Class 1 local supplier

Class 1 local supplier means a supplier whose goods and services offered for procurement has local content greater than or equal to 50 %. Now with this amendment, the ministry can notify local content requirements even greater than 50 %.

What is the local content?

The local content is the value-added in India. This means the total value of the item procured – the value of imported content in the item. This is a proportion of the total value in percentage.

What is public procurement?

The process by which the government and state-owned enterprises can purchase goods from the private sector. The process uses a part of the tax payer money. Thus, strict guidelines and tracking are essential.

Public procurement policy of India

The public procurement policy intends to incentivize production that is linked to local content requirements. The Government of India has notified a public procurement policy for the micro and small enterprises as well. According to this policy, 25 % of annual procurement by the department, Central Ministries, and public sector enterprises have to be made from micro and small enterprises.

6. India allows export of onions to Bangladesh

On September 18, 2020, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade lifted the ban on the export of onions to other countries including Bangladesh. The decision was made after a long meeting with the Ministry of External Affairs and Commerce.

Highlights

The lift of Ban came after Bangladesh High Commission complained to India about a price hike of onions in Bangladesh due to the ban. The price of onions in Bangladesh shot up over 50 percent as India imposed a ban on Exports.

What is the issue?

India recently decided to ban the export of onions to Bangladesh and certain other countries as the crop was damaged heavily due to excessive rains. This increased the prices of onions in Bangladesh up to 100 Taka per kilogram. This is nearly three times the normal price of onions in the country.

Bangladesh's stand

Bangladesh produces 25.57 lakh tons of onions every year. The demand for onion in Bangladesh is 25 lakh tonnes. The country is self-sufficient in onions. However, a large number of onions get spoilt as it is a perishable item. In order to make up the deficit, Bangladesh turns to India. Apart from India, Bangladesh has now turned towards Turkey and Egypt to import onions.

What made India impose the export ban?

India had imposed the ban as the prices in the retail onion markets shot up. This was mainly because of the rains in the month of August damaged onion crops. These onions were to hit the market in early September. Also, the rains washed away stored onions in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and parts of Maharashtra. The demand for Indian onions is also rising from the international market. India usually exports onions to Sri Lanka Bangladesh and Gulf countries.

Concerns of Bangladesh

Bangladesh has expressed a 'deep concern' with India for its sudden ban on the export of onions. In January 2020, during the visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India, the countries agreed that India will inform Bangladesh ahead of a possible ban.

7. Jammu and Kashmir launch National Generic Document Registration System

On September 18 2020 Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha launched the National Generic Document Registration System for the union territory. The territory is now marking a major shift from its previous manual registration system to the online registration system for transactions in the purchase or sale of land.

Background

Before the abrogation of article 370, according to the Jammu and Kashmir constitution, citizens outside Kashmir cannot buy or sell land in the territory. Now that the article has been abrogated the territory of Kashmir is being integrated with the National Generic

Document Registration System. This is a big step towards national integration and a leap towards “One Nation One Software.”

What is National Generic Document Registration System?

The system was generated by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) to address the diversity and variations that prevail across the states on account of formats, languages, processes, and formulae. The software enables “anywhere access” to information and data to both the Enforcement Agencies and to the common man. The system has so far been adopted in three states namely Punjab Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Six more states and union territories such as Andaman and Nicobar Islands Goa Bihar Manipur Jharkhand and Mizoram are moving towards the system. The national generic document registration system was developed under Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme.

Digital India land records modernization program

The program aims to digitize maps integrated data and carry out surveys to update records using modern techniques such as GIS mapping. The program is to provide more emphasis on establishing conclusive ownership using biometric identification and blockchain Technology. It is a centrally funded scheme that was launched in 2016. The aim of the program is to create error-free land records and enable easy access to information all over the country.

Along with the scheme the Government of India is also computerizing Sub Registrar offices in the states.