

1. State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART) Project

Maharashtra Government has launched World Bank assisted State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART) Project to transform rural Maharashtra.

- The objective of project is to create and support value chains in post-harvest segments of agriculture, facilitate agribusiness investment, stimulate SMEs within the value chain.
- Aim is to revamp agricultural value chains, with special focus on marginal farmers across 1,000 villages.
- It will also support resilient agriculture production systems, expand access to new and organised markets for producers and enhance private sector participation in the agribusiness.
- It will cover almost one-fourth of Maharashtra. Its focus is on villages which are reeling under worst agriculture crisis compounded by lack of infrastructure and assured value chains to channelize farm produce.

Significance:

- The project is giant step towards transformation of rural economy and empowerment of farmers and also sustainable agriculture through public-private partnership (PPP) model.
- It seeks to ensure higher production of crops and create robust market mechanism to enable farmers to reap higher remunerations for the yield. It unites agriculture oriented corporate and farmers by providing them common platform.

2. UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

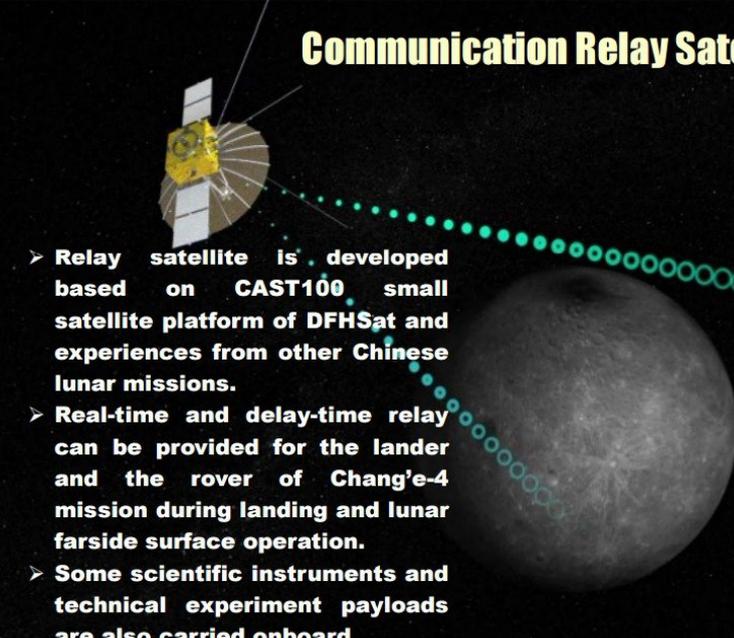
- Former Indian diplomat, Preeti Saran has been elected unopposed to an Asia Pacific seat on the United Nation's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).
- The UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) elected Saran to the 18-member committee 'CESCR' for a four-year term beginning on January 1, 2019.

About Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR):

- The CESCR was set up in 1985 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.
- It was constituted with an aim to monitor on its behalf the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR), which has been ratified by 169 countries.
- The countries that are parties to the covenant are required to submit reports to the CESCR every five years on how they protect the economic, social and cultural rights.
- The committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.
- The Members of the CESCR serve in their personal capacities as experts and do not represent their countries even though they may be nominated by their own nation.
- The CESCR meets in Geneva and holds two sessions per year, consisting of a three week plenary and a one-week pre-session working group.

Chang'e-4 mission

- China has launched Chang'e-4, a first probe ever to explore the dark side of the Moon, marking another milestone in its ambitious space programme.
- The Moon is tidally locked to Earth, rotating at the same rate that it orbits our planet, so the far side is never visible from Earth. The probe, the Chang'e-4, is expected to make the first ever soft landing on the far side of the Moon. Previous spacecraft have seen the far side of the Moon, but none has landed on it.
- The far side of the moon known as 'South Pole-Aitken Basin' still remains a mystery among space scientists and by sending a probe there, China will outdo the historical achievements of the US and USSR.



Communication Relay Satellite for Chang'e-4 Mission

| Item | Relay Satellite Major Parameters |
|----------------------------|---|
| Orbit | Halo orbit around EM L2 |
| Platform | CAST100 |
| Mass | 425kg |
| Attitude Control | Three-axis stabilized control Pointing control accuracy: 0.06° |
| Propulsion | Hydrazine propulsion system 130N thrust for orbit transfer Carrying 100kg propellant |
| TT&C | USB+VLBI Date rate: 1000bps/2048bps |
| Relay Communication | Four links between satellite and rover/lander (X band) , One link between satellite and Earth(S band) 4.2m diameter parabolic antenna Data rate:125bps (To rover/lander) ~280kbps (From rover/lander) 2Mbps (To Earth stations, S band) |
| Lifetime | More than 5 years |

- Relay satellite is developed based on CAST100 small satellite platform of DFHsat and experiences from other Chinese lunar missions.
- Real-time and delay-time relay can be provided for the lander and the rover of Chang'e-4 mission during landing and lunar farside surface operation.
- Some scientific instruments and technical experiment payloads are also carried onboard.

About the mission:

- Chang'e 4 is the fourth mission in the country's lunar mission series which is being named after the Chinese moon goddess.
- The tasks of the Chang'e-4 probe include low-frequency radio astronomical observation, surveying the terrain and landforms, detecting the mineral composition, and measuring the neutron radiation and neutral atoms to study the environment on the far side of the moon.

Significance of the mission:

- According to experts, landing on the far side of the moon is undoubtedly one of the most challenging missions ever launched by any of the world's superpowers.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy conferred Skoch Award for National Significance.

- The award has been conferred considering its purpose and critical role played in installing about 73 GW renewable energy capacity in the country.
- With 21 per cent of total installed capacity, within the year renewable energy grossed one billion units of electricity in the country.

India's ranking:

- India ranks fourth in the world in wind energy capacity, and India ranks fifth in solar & total energy capacity installed in the world.
- India had played a critical role in setting up of international solar alliance.

Background:

Skoch Group

- It is a think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with a focus on inclusive growth since 1997.
- It has instituted India's highest independent civilian honors' in the field of governance, finance, technology, economics and social sector.

Skoch Award 2018

Who can nominate?

- Central government
- State government
- Local body
- Municipality
- City/District administration
- State Owned Enterprises/Undertakings

SKOCH Award celebrates excellence of governance delivery by domain departments. This includes having sufficient familiarity, capacity and knowledge about the functionality of their systems, processes and outcomes.

Food and Agriculture organization (FAO) Council approves India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023.

- Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has said that the 160 session of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Council, currently underway in Rome, approved India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023.
- In addition, the FAO Council also approved India's membership to the Executive Board of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) for 2020 and 2021.

Minister's statement:

- This international endorsement comes in the backdrop of India celebrating 2018 as the National Year of Millets for promoting cultivation and consumption of these nutria-cereals.
- This is further supported by increase in Minimum Support Prices (MSP) of millets.
- Millets consists of Jowar, Bajra, Ragi and minor millets together termed as nutriacereals.

CURRENT AFFAIRES DECEMBER - 2018

- Through the Department of Food and Public Distribution , State Governments are allowed to procure jowar, bajra, maize and ragi from framers at MSP.

About FAO –

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- Headquarters: Rome, Italy
- Founded: 16 October 1945
- Goal of FAO: Their goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

Clean Sea- 2018:

- It is a Regional Level Marine Oil Pollution Response Exercise conducted by Indian Coast Guard (ICG) recently at sea off Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar (A&B) Islands.
- The objective of exercise was to ascertain preparedness of IGC, resource agencies and other stakeholders in responding to major oil spill in line with provisions of National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP).
- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) under Ministry of Defence is responsible for marine environment protection in maritime zones of India and is coordinating authority for response to oil spills in Indian waters.
- It has drawn up National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP) and has established three pollution response centres at Mumbai, Chennai and Port Blair.

SOURCE:

1. THE HINDU
2. PIB