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News: Construction of 65,000 km of national highways is being done under Bharatmala Phase 1 and 2, says Nitin Gadkari

- Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has said that construction of 65 thousand kilometres of National Highways is being done under the Bharatmala Phase - 1 and 2.
- He said, government is expeditiously working towards the development of a National Highway network of two lakh kilometres by 2025.

Bharatmala Pariyojana

- Bharatmala Pariyojana is an **umbrella program for the highways sector** envisaged by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**.
- Under Phase-I of Bharatmala Pariyojana, **implementation of 34,800 km of national highways in 5 years (from 2017 to 2022) has been approved at an estimated outlay of Rs. 5,35,000 crore.**
- **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** has mandated the development of about 27,500 km of national highways under Phase-I.
- Phase-II envisages around **48,000 km of road network across India by 2024.**

- With about 52.32 lakh km of road network comprising National Highways, State Highways and other roads, **India has the second largest road network in the world.**

Objectives

- To **optimise the efficiency of freight and passenger movement across the country** by bridging critical infrastructure gaps through effective interventions.
- The effective interventions include the **development of economic corridors, inter corridors and feeder routes, national corridor efficiency improvement, border and international connectivity roads, coastal and port connectivity roads and greenfield expressways.**
- **Economic Corridors:** These **are integrated networks of infrastructure within a geographical area** designed to stimulate economic development.
- **Greenfield Projects:** They **lack constraints imposed by prior work** on the site. Typically, it entails **development on a completely vacant site** and architects start completely from scratch.
- **Brownfield Projects:** They **carry constraints related to the current state of the site and might be contaminated or have existing structures** that architects have to tear down or modify in some way before the project can move forward.

- To generate a large number of direct and indirect employment opportunities in the construction and infrastructure sector and also as part of the enhanced economic activity resulting from better road connectivity across the country.
- To connect 550 districts in the country through national highway linkages.
- Improvement in the efficiency of existing corridors through the development of Multimodal Logistics Parks and elimination of chokepoint. Multimodal Logistics Parks are a key policy initiative of the Government of India to improve the country's logistics sector by lowering overall freight costs, reducing vehicular pollution and congestion, and cutting warehousing costs. A chokepoint is a single point through which all incoming and outgoing network traffic is funnelled and hence, leads to congestion and traffic.
- Enhance focus on improving connectivity in North East and leveraging synergies with Inland Waterways.
- Emphasis on the use of scientific and technological planning for Project Preparation and Asset Monitoring.
- Satellite mapping of corridors to identify upgradation requirements.
- Delegation of powers to expedite project delivery for successful completion of Phase I by 2022.

News: 5th East Asia Summit Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation to begin in Kolkata today

East Asia Summit (EAS)

- East Asia Summit is a leaders led forum of **18 countries of Asia –Pacific region**.
- EAS was founded in 14th December 2005 with **Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, United States and Vietnam as its members**.
- The EAS membership represents around **54% of the world's population and accounts for 58% of global GDP**.
- The EAS is an ASEAN–centered forum; it can **only be chaired by an ASEAN member**.
- **Priority areas:** Environment and Energy, Education, Finance, Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Natural Disaster Management and ASEAN Connectivity.

Significance for India

- For India, EAS acts as an **alternative to the APEC** in which India doesn't enjoy the membership.

- India's membership to the EAS is a **recognition of its fast growing economic and political clout.**
- **Act East policy of India:** In order to build multi-faceted relations with ASEAN and other multilateral nations and strengthen bilateral relations India has emphasized upon its Act East Policies for which EAS will prove crucial.
- China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and the nature of its growing investments has led the ASEAN countries to view India as a potential power that **could balance a rising China.**
- **India's strength lies in service sector and information-technology** and Japan has a sound capital base. Thus there are complementarities in trade and production structures of the EAS members.
- **India's deep cultural and civilizational links with the EAS countries** are widely known. India can play a major role in cultural and people to people cooperation with the region, which can reinforce the economic momentum for community building.
- EAS **meetings are held after annual** ASEAN leaders' meetings.

News: Mysuru declaration

- Participants from 16 States signed the Mysuru Declaration and resolved to roll out the Common Minimum Service delivery by Panchayats across the country from April 1, 2022 at the one day National Consultative Workshop on Citizen Charter and Delivery of Services by Panchayats organised by Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

Mysuru Declaration

- The Mysuru declaration is aimed at recognising Citizen Centric Services as the “Heart of Governance”.
- Services can be provided by the Panchayats that have been listed by the Ministry and the States can start working on the guidelines issued by the Ministry.

News: New Crypto Bill seeks to ban private players

- The Union Government will introduce a Bill to regulate cryptocurrency and ostensibly ban all private cryptocurrencies, along with 25 other pieces of legislation, in the winter session of Parliament that begins on November 29.

Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital

Currency Bill, 2021

- The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021 seeks to **create a facilitative framework for creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India.**
- The central bank is looking at launching a pilot project for an official digital currency soon.
- The Bill also seeks **to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India.** However, it **allows for certain exceptions to promote the underlying technology of cryptocurrency and its uses.**
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