

Cabinet approves North-East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)

The Union Cabinet chaired approved the North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS), 2017 with financial outlay of Rs.3000 crores upto March, 2020. Government will provide necessary allocations for remaining period of scheme after assessment before March 2020. NEIDS is a combination of the incentives covered under the earlier two schemes with a much larger outlay.

Details:

In order to promote employment in the North East States, Government is incentivizing primarily the MSME Sector through this scheme. Government is also providing specific incentive through the scheme to generate employment.

All eligible industrial units, which are getting benefits of one or more components of other schemes of the Government of India, will also be considered for benefits of other components of this scheme.

Under the Scheme, the following incentives shall be provided to new industrial units set up in the North Eastern States including Sikkim:

Central Capital Investment Incentive for Access to Credit (CCIIAC)	30% of the investment in Plant & Machinery with an upper limit of Rs.5 Crore on the incentive amount per unit.
Central Interest Incentive (CII)	3% on working capital credit advanced by eligible Banks/ Financial institutions for first 5 years from the date of commencement of commercial production by the unit.
Central Comprehensive Insurance Incentive (CCII)	Reimbursement of 100% insurance premium on insurance of building and Plant & Machinery for 5 years from the date of commencement of commercial production by the unit.
Goods and Service Tax (GST) Reimbursement	Reimbursement up to the extent of Central Govt. share of CGST and IGST for 5 Years from the date of commencement of commercial production by the unit.
Income-Tax (IT) Reimbursement	Reimbursement of Centre's share of income tax for first 5 years including the year of commencement of commercial production by the unit.
Transport Incentive (TI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 20% of the cost of transportation including the subsidy currently provided by Railways/ Railway PSU for movement of finished goods by rail. ➤ 20% of cost of transportation for finished goods, for movement through Inland Waterways Authority of India.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 33% of cost of transportation of air freight on perishable goods (as defined by IATA) from the airport nearest to place of production to any airport within the country.
<p>Employment Incentive (EI)</p>	<p>The Government shall pay 3.67% of the employer's contribution to the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) in addition to Government bearing 8.33% Employee Pension Scheme (EPS) contribution of the employer in the Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY).</p>

The overall cap for benefits under all components of incentives will be of Rs. 200 crores per unit.

The newly introduced scheme shall promote industrialization in the States of the North Eastern Region and will boost employment and income generation.

Over 4 lakh beggars in India, West Bengal tops list, Lakshadweep ranks lowest

The Government of India has come out with the total number of beggars in the country. As per the data released by Union ministry of Social Justice, there are around 4 lakh beggars in total. The highest number of beggars, 81,000, are in West Bengal. Lakshadweep, a union territory, has only two people begging for their livelihood. West Bengal is followed by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at number two and three respectively. Key highlights of the report are as under:-

- A total number of 4,13,670 beggars are residing in India, including 2,21,673 males and 1,91,997 females beggars in the country. The data, based on 2011 census, says female beggars outnumber their male counterparts in the states of West Bengal, Assam and Manipur.
- West Bengal, topping the chart with 81,224 beggars, was followed by Uttar Pradesh (65,835), Andhra Pradesh (30,218), Bihar (29,723). Madhya Pradesh (28,695) and Rajasthan (25,853) are at number five and six in the list.
- The government data shows there are lesser number of beggars in Union Territories. While Lakshadweep has only two beggars, Dadra Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and the Andaman and Nicobar islands have only 19, 22 and 56 beggars respectively.
- Among the union territories, New Delhi had the largest number of beggars 2,187 followed by 121 in Chandigarh. Among the north eastern states, Assam topped the chart with 22,116 beggars, while Mizoram ranked low with 53 beggars.

The alleviation of beggars falls under the purview of social justice ministry. Begging and poverty are age old issue in India. Recently, Rahul Gandhi-led Congress party promised that it would set up a 'national poverty alleviation fund' and impose a 5 per cent cess on the incomes of the top 1 per cent richest Indians if it was voted to power in 2019.

Meanwhile, an organisation for backward classes has urged the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) to include nomadics, beggars, wandering caste, depending castes, services castes, nomadic tribes, semi-nomadic tribes, denotified tribes in the A group of the sub-classification of OBCs.

In October last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had set up a commission to divide the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) into sub-groups, a move that would help the most backward communities to reap reservation benefits.

Sweden tops the WEF energy transition index

India was ranked at 78th, lower than its emerging market peers like Brazil and China, among 114 countries on the World Economic Forum's (WEF) energy transition index that was topped by Sweden.

The report titled Fostering Effective Energy Transition, ranks countries on how well they are able to balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability. According to the report India has taken "bold measures" to improve energy access, energy efficiency, and to improve the deployment of renewable sources of energy.

However, energy transition in the country will require "large investments, and an enabling environment and robust regulatory frameworks to support the transition". "India is at the crossroads in its energy transition journey. Ranking 78th on the Energy Transition Index," the report said.

Among its emerging market peers Brazil stood at the 38th place, Russia at 70th and China at 76th place. The overall list was topped by Sweden, followed by Norway at the 2nd position and Switzerland at the 3rd rank.

Other countries on the top 10 include Finland (4th), Denmark (5th), the Netherlands (6th), the UK (7th), Austria (8th), France (9th) and Iceland (10th). On India, the report said, energy needs in the country are primarily met by fossil fuels with implications for environmental sustainability and increasing energy import costs.

Furthermore, a considerable share of India's population still lacks access to electricity and clean cooking fuel, it noted. "In the Energy Transition Index (ETI), India ranks in the third performance quartile and third readiness quartile, making it an emerging country that is approaching the leapfrog category," the WEF report said.

Interestingly, between 2013 and 2018, India improved its performance score by 5.6 percentage points, mainly with improved energy access, reduced subsidies and reduced import costs, the report noted. "Recent initiatives to improve electricity access have experienced some success and the outlook is positive; however, the road to continuous access to power and clean cooking fuel for all is long," it added.

India has the largest government-mandated renewable energy programme, with a target of 175GW renewable energy capacity by 2022, and it announced plans to shift completely to electric vehicles by 2030.