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Chief Minister Relief Fund

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has clarified that the contributions to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund or the State relief fund will not qualify as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure, while any donation to the PM CARES Fund will.
- The Chief Minister's Relief Fund or State Relief Fund for Covid-19 is not included in Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013, and therefore any contribution to such funds shall not qualify as admissible CSR expenditure.
- Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 provides the list of activities that can be included in CSR.
- Some political parties criticized this saying it is discriminatory and goes against the constitutional principle of federalism.
- However, donations to the State Disaster Management Authority to combat Covid-19 can be counted as admissible CSR expenditure.

Corporate Social Responsibility

- The term "Corporate Social Responsibility" in general can be referred to as a corporate initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment and impact on social welfare.
- In India, the concept of CSR is governed by clause 135 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- India is the first country in the world to mandate CSR spending along with a framework to identify potential CSR activities.
- The CSR provisions within the Act is applicable to companies with an annual turnover of 1,000 crore and more, or a net worth of Rs. 500 crore and more, or a net profit of Rs. 5 crore and more.
- The Act requires companies to set up a CSR committee which shall recommend a Corporate Social Responsibility Policy to the Board of Directors and also monitor the same from time to time.
- The Act encourages companies to spend 2% of their average net profit in the previous three years on CSR activities.
- The indicative activities, which can be undertaken by a company under

CSR, have been specified under Schedule VII of the Act.

- The activities include:

1. Eradicating extreme hunger and poverty,
2. Promotion of education, gender equality and empowering women,
3. Combating Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and other diseases,
4. Ensuring environmental sustainability.
5. Contribution to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund or any other fund set up by the Central Government for socio-economic development and relief and funds for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women etc.

PM CARES Fund

- Union government has set up the Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES Fund) to deal with any kind of emergency or distress situation like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This Fund has been set up owing to a number of requests made by the people to support the government in the wake of the COVID-19 emergency.
- The Fund is a public charitable trust with the Prime Minister as its Chairman.
- Other Members include Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister.
- The Fund enables micro-donations as a result of which a large number of people will be able to contribute with the smallest of denominations.
- The Fund will strengthen disaster management capacities and encourage research on protecting citizens.
- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has clarified that contributions by companies towards the PM-CARES Fund will count towards mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure.

Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund (PMNRF)

- PMNRF was instituted in 1948 by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.
- The fund is currently used primarily to tackle natural calamities like floods, cyclones and earthquakes.
- The fund is also used to help with medical treatment like kidney transplantation, cancer treatment and acid attack.

- The fund consists entirely of public contributions and does not get any budgetary support.
- It accepts voluntary contributions from Individuals, Organizations, Trusts, Companies and Institutions etc.
- The corpus of the fund is also invested in various forms with scheduled commercial banks and other agencies.
- Disbursements are made with the approval of the Prime Minister.
- The fund is recognized as a Trust under the Income Tax Act and the same is managed by the Prime Minister or multiple delegates for national causes.
- Contributions towards PMNRF are notified for 100% deduction from taxable income under section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Primordial Black Holes

- Primordial Black Holes (PBH) were formed during the Hot Big Bang phase.
- PBH can be massively large as 3000kms or be extremely tiny like nucleus of an atom.
- It is believed that they are formed as a result of collapsing radiations as opposed to the collapse of massive stars, which is the case of any other black holes.
- A recent study on Primordial black holes has confirmed that this marginal rise in potential energy resulted in birth of several PBHs and also emitted very powerful gravitational waves.
- Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), has studied primordial black holes that were born as a result of a tiny bump in the potential energy levels of the universe, at a time when it was expanding rapidly.
- After big bang the universe had expanded to nearly 10^27 times its original size, that too, within just fraction of a second by the time Cosmic Inflation phase concluded.
- Thereafter, the remnant energy possessed by gravitational force got converted mainly into photons (light) in addition to protons, electrons, neutrons and other particles.
- As the universe continued to grow exponentially during the Cosmic Inflation phase, it sent across tiny quantum jitters.
- These fluctuations, released in a specific fashion, when sufficiently large, slowly give birth to galaxies and stars and there is a bump in energy.
- Among those that were significantly large, helped form PBHs.
- The bump in energy then produces PBHs besides triggering very strong

gravitational waves.
- While not all declining energy showcased similar energy bumps, and hence, PBHs were not born in all instances.

Initiatives for Improving Online Education Ecosystem

- Recently, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has launched two new initiatives for improving and monitoring the online education ecosystem in India, they are

1. **Bharat Padhe Online Campaign**
    - 'Bharat Padhe Online' is a week-long campaign up to 16th April, 2020 for crowdsourcing of ideas for improving the online education ecosystem of India.
    - It aims to invite all the best brains in India to share suggestions/solutions directly with the HRD Ministry to overcome constraints of online education while promoting the available digital education platforms.
    - Students and teachers are the main target audience in it.
2. **YUKTI web-portal**
    - YUKTI (Young India Combating Covid with Knowledge, Technology and Innovation) is a unique portal and dashboard to monitor and record the efforts and initiatives of MHRD.
    - It will also cover the various initiatives and efforts of the institutions in academics, research especially related to Covid-19, social initiatives by institutions and the measures taken for the betterment of the total wellbeing of the students.
    - It will allow various institutions to share their strategies for various challenges which are there because of the unprecedented situation of Covid-19 and other future initiatives.
    - The portal will also establish a two-way communication channel between the Ministry of HRD and the institutions so that the Ministry can provide the necessary support system to the institutions.
    - This portal will help in addressing critical issues related to student promotion policies, placements related challenges and physical and mental well-being of students in these challenging times.
    - The portal will give inputs for better planning and will enable it to monitor effectively its activities for coming six months.
    - It aims to fulfil the goals of the Ministry in the wake of Covid-19 to keep the academic community healthy, both physically & mentally and to enable a continuous high-quality learning environment for

learners.

SATYAM Program

- Recently, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has initiated the Science and Technology of Yoga and Meditation (SATYAM) programme.
- It was conceptualized in 2015 by the DST under its Cognitive Science Research Initiative (CSRI).
- To foster scientific research on the effects of yoga and meditation on physical & mental health and on cognitive functioning in healthy people as well as in patients with disorders.
- Investigations on the effect of Yoga and Meditation on physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Investigations on the effect of Yoga and Meditation on the body, brain, and mind in terms of basic processes and mechanisms.
- Scientists/academicians with research background in 'Yoga and Meditation' and having regular positions are invited to participate in this initiative.
- Practitioners actively involved in yoga and meditation practices are also encouraged to apply in collaboration with academic and research institutions of repute.
- The project is tenable for a maximum period of three years.
- Under SATYAM, DST has recently invited proposals to study appropriate intervention of yoga and meditation in fighting Covid-19 and similar kinds of viruses.

Source: PIB, the Hindu, Indian Express

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