

SHORTNEWS

1. UDYAM SAKHI PORTAL

As of August 2025, 4,535 women entrepreneurs have registered on the Udyam Sakhi Portal. About Udyam Sakhi Portal Udyam Sakhi Portal aims to empower women entrepreneurs by providing access to financial schemes, policies, training, and market linkages. It helps women to start, build, and expand businesses, thereby making them self-reliant and self-sufficient.

1. Launch: March 2018
2. Initiative of: Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

Services Provided on the Portal

Information

Shares information on policies and programmes of the MSME Ministry and other Central Ministries. It also provides details of financial schemes such as the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency (MUDRA), etc.

Entrepreneurship Development

Offers entrepreneurship learning tools and incubation facilities.

Training and Mentorship

Conducts training programmes for fundraising and connects women to mentors and facilitates one-on-one investor meetings for funding opportunities.

Market Support

Provides facilities for market surveys and connects entrepreneurs with buyers. It also shares information on exhibitions, trade fairs, and international events organized by the MSME Ministry.

Learning and Development

Offers education, technical assistance, and training for business sustainability.

2. PALMYRA PALM

Odisha has launched plantation drives across districts to reduce lightning deaths and protect ecosystems. Palmyra palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) belongs to the Arecaceae family, is dioecious, slow-growing, and can live up to 150 years. Declared as the State Tree of Tamil Nadu. It was called an "Antidote for poverty" by Mahatma Gandhi.

Growing Conditions

1. Soil: Sandy, loamy, and well-drained soils.
2. Climate: Tropical and subtropical climates with high sunlight exposure.
3. Rainfall: 750–1500 mm annual rainfall.
4. Distribution: It is widely found in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Malaysia. India has around 60 million trees.

Uses of Palmyra Palm

Nutritional Value

Fruits are rich in Vitamin C, Vitamin A, sugars, calcium, and antioxidants, helping in hydration during summer. Tuber powder provides fiber, iron, and phosphorus, aiding in RBC synthesis and bone health.

Medicinal Uses

In Siddha medicine, palmyra roots are processed into Panai Karpam to cure jaundice, alopecia, and eye diseases.

Ecological Balance

Serves as a food source for elephants during lean seasons, reducing human-elephant conflict. Provides fodder, fiber, timber, and beverages, making it a "tree of livelihood" with over 800 uses.

Lightning Arresters

Due to their tall and straight growth, palmyra palms absorb lightning strikes, protecting farmers and rural communities. It is also planted as a windbreak on the plains.

Daily use material

Its leaves are used for thatching, mats, baskets, fans, hats, umbrellas, and as writing material

3. NAVYA INITIATIVE

Recently, the Government highlighted progress under the Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational training for Young Adolescent Girls (NAVYA) initiative.

Coverage

As of August 2025, the initiative has covered 19 States and 27 districts. A total of 3,850 adolescent girls will be trained under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0).

NAVYA is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD).

1. Launch: June 2025.
2. Target Beneficiaries: Adolescent girls aged 16–18 years in aspirational districts to build socio-economic independence through skill development.

Objectives of NAVYA

1. Provide demand-driven vocational training aligned with both traditional and non-traditional sectors.
2. Facilitate holistic development through modules on health, nutrition, hygiene, financial literacy, life skills, and legal awareness.
3. Promote employability, self-employment, and forward linkages such as internships, apprenticeships, and job opportunities.
4. Strengthen gender-inclusive skilling and create a safe, supportive training environment.
5. Bridge the gap between education and livelihood, especially for girls in underserved and remote areas.

PMKVY

The PMKVY scheme was launched on July 15, 2015 to encourage and promote skill development in the country by providing free short duration skill training and incentivizing this by providing monetary rewards to youth for skill certification.

PMKVY 4.0

Under PMKVY 4.0, the focus is to empower trained candidates to choose their varied career path. To enable the opportunities for employment, Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) platform has been launched to integrate skilling, education, employment, and entrepreneurship ecosystems.

4. NATO: ARTICLE 5

Recently, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte stated that NATO membership for Ukraine is not under discussion, but "Article 5 type" security guarantees are being considered.

Ukraine–NATO Connection

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukraine has sought deeper integration with NATO as a strategic objective enshrined in its Constitution. NATO membership for Ukraine has faced opposition from the U.S. and several allies, citing risks of direct escalation with Russia. As an alternative, discussions now focus on security guarantees comparable to NATO's Article 5, without formal membership.

Article 5 of NATO

Principle of Collective Defence

Article 5 of the NATO Washington Treaty declares that an armed attack against one member is considered an attack against all.

Scope of Action

It authorizes member states to respond in collective self-defense, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain security.

Geographical Application

Article 5 applies to attacks on the territory of NATO members north of the Tropic of Cancer, covering Europe, North America, and parts of Asia.

Significance

Offering Ukraine Article 5-type guarantees signals NATO's commitment to deter further Russian aggression while avoiding direct NATO membership. This could strengthen Ukraine's defense and diplomacy while facilitating future negotiations involving Russia, Ukraine, and Western powers.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO is a transatlantic security alliance composed of thirty-two member countries.

Establishment

It was established in 1949 with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, also called the Washington Treaty.

Objectives

Cooperation

To provide a unique link between these transatlantic countries, enabling them to consult and cooperate on political and military issues.

Limiting threat

To counter the threat of erstwhile Soviet Union's possible expansion attempts in Europe.

Membership Criteria

Defined in Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, is open to "any other European state" that can advance the treaty's principles and enhance the security of the North Atlantic area.

Recent Members

Most recent additions were North Macedonia in 2020, Finland in 2023 and Sweden in 2024.

Headquarters

Brussels, Belgium.

5. HIGH LEVELS OF SELENIUM IN GROUNDWATER

Minister of State for Jal Shakti informed the Rajya Sabha that high levels of selenium have been detected in groundwater samples in Haryana and Punjab. The data was based on a survey by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) conducted in 2019. Permissible limit of selenium: 10 ppb (parts per billion)

Selenium

Nature

A trace mineral required by the body in very small amounts.

Importance

Essential for key functions such as metabolism, thyroid regulation, and immune system health.

Food Sources

Found abundantly in Brazil nuts, seafood, meat, poultry, and organ meats.

Toxicity Symptoms

Excess intake can cause nausea, vomiting, hair and nail brittleness or loss, discoloration, fatigue, irritability, and foul breath odor.

Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)

Set up in 1954, CGWB functions under the Ministry of Water Resources. The CGWB is the apex national organization responsible for scientific surveys, exploration, monitoring, management, and regulation of India's groundwater resources.

