



INNOVATIVE IAS

Daily News Analysis

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NitiAayog

Why in news?

- The Govt think tank NitiAayog on December 18, 2019, announced that it is considering options to include fish, chicken and eggs in the PDS (Public Distribution System). The move is expected to be included in NitiAayog's 15-year Vision Document to be published in 2020 and be effective from April 1, 2020.

Key points:

- The aim of the move is to include one or more of nutritious food items under the food subsidy programme.
- This will widen the list of food items along with coarse grains, rice, wheat and pulses. The think tank believes that supply oils, spices and sugar under PDS is unhealthy.
- According to the UN, 195 million Indians are undernourished. India constitutes one-fourth of global hunger burden.
- However, India being self sufficient in food grains, is also a net export of certain food categories. Hence, the problem lies in lack of nutritious food. Hence, NITI Aayog is coming up with subsidy regime for protein rich food.

NITI Aayog Vision Document

- Under the direction of PMO (Prime Minister Office), NITI Aayog has already begun drafting a vision document 2035. The document will include ways to increase rural income, making India a preferred manufacturing destination and an export hub, boost Industry 4.0, ways to address unemployment and underemployment in the country, etc

AMRUT scheme

Why in News?

- The Government of India extended the deadline of its flagship scheme AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) by two more years.

Key points:

- The mission was launched in 2015 by PM Modi promising 139 lakh water connections and 145 lakh sewer connections by March 2020.
- After its launch, Rajasthan was the first state to submit its State Annual Action Plan (SAAP).
- The plan is submitted by the state governments to the centre. With the help of the plan the centre formulates city level estimation of budget required to avail water supply, draining system, sewerages, digital and internet facilities, industrial and transport facilities, etc.
- The SAAP was submitted by West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh (for Amaravati project that was closed recently), Haryana, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana.



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KhadiRumal'

Why in News?

- Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched the sale of 'KhadiRumal' stitched by militancy affected women of Nagrota town of Jammu and Kashmir.

Key points:

- The aim is to provide employment to the women in the terrorist affected areas as well as create employment opportunities for militancy affected families of J&K.
- In 2016, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) started a napkin stitching centre at Nagrota for the families of militancy-affected areas in Valley, with a view that if people living in rural areas are provided job opportunities then they would not need leave their homes in search of jobs.
- At the event, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) also signed an agreement with Paytm to facilitate the sale of 2 crore pieces of Rumals through their portal. MSME Ministry also announced 50% increase in remuneration of women

United Nations Security Council meet on Kashmir cancelled

The United Nations Security Council meet was sought by China on December 17, 2019. The meeting was sought after India decided to end special status of Jammu and Kashmir by abrogating Article 370. However, the meeting was cancelled with the French supporting India. All over the world Pakistan is supported only by China, Turkey and Malaysia over the Kashmir issue.

Key points:

- China insisted reviving India-Pakistan issue in the United Nations where the issue has been dormant since 1971. India believes that China is bringing up the issue ahead of India-china special representatives meet in Agra and India-US 2+2 defence talks that are to be held in December 2019.
- In August 2019, the UNSC held a closed-door meeting to discuss India-Pakistan issues. However, no final statement was released at the end of the meeting.

United Nations Security Council

- The UNSC is the most powerful organization of the United Nations whose responsibility is to maintain peace and security.
- India is not a permanent member of the UNSC. As a member of G4, India is seeking permanent representation.
- All the G4 countries are seeking permanent membership. It includes Brazil, Germany, India and Japan. Unlike G7, where the primary focus is economy, at G4 the common denominator is to get permanent membership seat at the security council.



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smog tower

Why in News?

- Recently, The Supreme Court gave three months' time to the Centre and the Delhi government for the pilot project of setting up a 'smog tower' at Connaught Place.
- The 'smog tower' will be used to deal with the problem of air pollution

Key points:

- Smog towers are structures designed to work as large-scale air purifiers.
- They are usually fitted with multiple layers of air filters, which clean the air of pollutants as it passes through them.
- China, which has been battling air pollution for a few years, has two smog towers — in its capital Beijing and in a northern city called Xi'an.
- The World Intellectual Property Organisation has notified that A City Cleaner developed by the Kurin System is the world's largest as well as the strongest air purifier

Right To Information Act

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court was hearing an application about the lack of transparency in the appointment of information commissioners.

Key points:

- The Supreme Court has directed the Centre and the state governments to appoint within three months information commissioners in the Central Information Commission and the State Information Commissions.
- It has also said that there was a need to evolve guidelines to stop misuse of the Right to Information Act.
- Chief Justice of India (CJI) SharadArvindBobde has said that the unbridled use of the Right to Information (RTI) Act had created a sense of “paralysis and fear” in the government and norms were needed to “filter” the requests.
- There is the serious problem of people filing RTI requests with malafide intentions, people set up by rivals.
- The CJI highlighted that the RTI Act had become a source of criminal intimidation by people.
- Besides highlighting that the court was not against the exercise of the right to information, the Chief Justice has said that guidelines need to be laid down to check the locus of the RTI applicant and put a filter on the kind of requests made under the 2005 Act.

National Broadband Mission'

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Communications has launched 'National Broadband Mission' that will facilitate universal and equitable access to broadband services across the country, especially



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in rural and remote areas.

Key points:

- The Mission is part of the National Digital Communications Policy, 2018.
- The vision of the Mission is to fast-track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion, and provide affordable and universal access of broadband for all.
- It can be noted that through BharatNet, broadband services have reached in as many as 142,000 village blocks, and the latest mission aims to offer broadband for all by 2022 including remotely-located hospitals, schools and post offices.
- Some of the objectives of the Mission which are structured with a strong emphasis on the three principles of universality, affordability and quality are:
 - Broadband access to all villages by 2022.
 - Significantly improve quality of services for mobile and internet.
 - Develop a Broadband Readiness Index (BRI) to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure and conducive policy ecosystem within a State/UT.
 - Creation of a digital fiber map of the Digital Communications network and infrastructure, including Optical Fiber Cables and Towers, across the country.
 - Laying of incremental 30 lakhs route km of Optical Fiber Cable and increase in tower density from 0.42 to 1.0 tower per thousand of population by 2024.

Pollution control

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court has directed to form a High Level Committee (HLC) and look into the feasibility of technologies to control and monitor pollution.

Key points:

- The HLC has members from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), NEERI, professors from IIT-Delhi, IIT-Kanpur and heads of environmental departments of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.
- Painting roads with photocatalytic coating to clean air, using anti-smog guns at construction sites to reduce dust pollution and setting up of a 20 metre-high 'smog tower' with air purifiers are among the pilot projects suggested by the High Level Committee (HLC) to the Supreme Court to control air pollution in Delhi and NCR.

Painting roads:

- There are companies that develop photocatalytic paints, which can remove pollutants from the air in the presence of sunlight and ultraviolet (UV) rays.
- It can be applied on a range of surfaces, such as roofing tiles or even on the surface of roads.
- Photocatalytic paints contain titanium dioxide [TiO₂] which acts as a catalyst when exposed



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to UV rays and removes atmospheric pollutants. The catalyst converts the pollutants into other species.

- But there is a risk that nanomaterials may result in the production of other undesirable species such as nitrous acid and formaldehyde, which will have adverse health impacts. However, such products have been used by the Dubai municipality in parks and also in Mexico.

Smog tower:

- The HLC has also suggested that a pilot project of “smog tower”, as suggested by an expert panel of IIT-Delhi, IIT-Bombay and Department of Science and Technology, may be taken up.
- The proposal had stated that 65% reduction in pollution can be achieved on an average up to 700 metres from the tower.

Anti-smog gun:

- Anti-smog gun is a device that sprays nebulised water droplets into the air through high-pressure propellers, which helps particles to settle down.
- Anti-smog guns may be effective in controlling localised dust during the period of application and more suitable to high dust emission zones such as large construction sites.

Oxy furnace:

- Oxy furnace uses only oxygen as fuel instead of atmospheric air (which contains nitrogen), thus reducing the production of NO_x by about 90% in industries.

Wireless Sensor Network (WSN):

- WSN technology to monitor air pollution is still in the developmental stage and IIT and NEERI are reviewing its performance.
- The committee has informed that WSN may be used as an indicative monitoring tool for a few activities like mining, large construction sites, to supplement air quality data and report to regulator for conducting further investigation.

LiDAR:

- LiDAR or Light Detection and Ranging is a high-end application of LASER-based technology for monitoring pollution.
- The HLC has recommended that this technology may be adopted for vertical monitoring at a few places to track transport of pollutants at higher altitude.

Bhibha

- The International Astronomical Union (IAU) named a white yellow star in Sextans Constellation as “Bhibha” and its planet as “Santamasa”



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- The star has been named Bhibhahonoring Indian Woman Scientist BhibhaChoudhury who discovered subatomic particle pi-meson. Bhibha means a bright beam of light in Bengali. The name Santamasa in Sanskrit means clouded. The name is appropriate as the planet's atmosphere is clouded.
- The IAU that celebrated its 100th birth anniversary on July 28, 2019, allowed every country to give a famous name to selected pair of exoplanet and its host star.
- Bhibha is an ageing star that is 6.2 billion years old and Santamsa is its only planet. The mass of the planet is expected to be 1.5 times as that of Jupiter and is very hot. Santamasa completed its revolution around its star in just about 2.1375 days.

Asian Development bank

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) has signed a US \$250 million loan agreement with Government of India to provide loan to public sector company Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) so as to expand energy efficiency investments in India that will benefit agricultural, institutional and residential consumers.
- Earlier, in 2016, ADB had approved a US \$200 million loan to EESL for demand side energy efficiency sector project that focused on efficient lighting and appliances.
- In addition to US \$250 million loan, a US \$46 million financing will be provided from Clean Technology Fund (CTF) that will be administered by ADB. Moreover, besides the loan amount, a technical assistance of US \$2 million will be provided to support EESL in implementing project.
- The project includes identifying new business opportunities, a gender action plan, mobilising private sector participation in energy efficiency services, and transferring knowledge about successful models. EESL, an energy service company of Centre government will also explore business models to generate greater public demand for e-vehicles for supporting India's current push for electric vehicles.

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