18 May 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

Cyclone Amphan

Context:

PM reviews preparations against Cyclone 'Amphan'.

Details:

- The Prime Minister took full stock of the situation and reviewed the response preparedness as well as the evacuation plan presented by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).
- The **severe cyclonic storm** 'AMPHAN' over southeast Bay of Bengal is very likely to move nearly northwards slowly and then re-curve north-north-eastwards.
- Odisha is bracing for heavy rain under the influence of the severe cyclonic storm, which is set to skirt away from the State's northern coast to make landfall between West Bengal and Bangladesh.
- The IMD has issued an 'orange alert' expecting heavy to very heavy rainfall in coastal districts.

Shekatkar Committee

Context:

Government implements Shekatkar Committee recommendations related to creating border infrastructure.

Details:

- The government has accepted and implemented three important recommendations of the **Committee of Experts (CoE)** under the Chairmanship of Lt General D B Shekatkar (Retd.) relating to border Infrastructure.
    - These were related to speeding up road construction, leading to socio-economic development in the border areas.
    - On the matter related to creating border infrastructure, the Government has implemented the recommendation to outsource road construction work beyond optimal capacity of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
    - It has been made mandatory to adopt Engineering Procurement Contract (EPC) mode for execution of all works costing more than Rs 100 crore.

About Shekatkar Committee:

- The Shekatkar Committee was set up by former defence minister Manohar Parrikar.
- The committee had submitted its report in December 2016.
- The report, which is now the guiding principle for ongoing defence reforms, has never been made public, because it covers operational aspects of the armed forces, and its disclosure is not in the interests of national security.
- The Defence Ministry is in the process of implementing a slew of reforms suggested by the committee, which studied how to make the armed forces much leaner, cohesive and modern.
- Initially, the Ministry had considered the report and sent 99 recommendations to the armed forces for making an implementation plan.
- In August 2017, the then Defence Minister Arun Jaitley had approved 65 recommendations pertaining to the Indian Army for implementation.
- Some of the recommendations of the Committee include the following:
    - India's defence budget should be in the range of 2.5 to 3 per cent of the GDP, keeping in mind possible future threats.
    - A Joint Services War College for training middle-level officers should be established.

- o It had also recommended that the Military Intelligence School at Pune be converted to a tri-service intelligence training establishment.
- o The Committee recommended the enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army.
- o Other recommendations of the committee that are already being implemented include optimisation of Signals establishments, restructuring of repair echelons, redeployment of Ordnance echelons, better utilisation of supply and transportation echelons and animal transport units, closure of military farms and Army postal establishments in peace locations, enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army, improving the efficiency of the National Cadet Corps.
- The Army has started implementing the Government Owned Contractor Operated (GOCO) model for its base workshops and ordnance depots, aiming to improve operational efficiency. Read more about this on CNA dated Jan 8, 2020.
- The creation of the post of the **Chief of Defence Staff** (CDS) is also one of the recommendations of the Shekatkar Committee. More about CDS on CNA dated August 20, 2019.

National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

Context:

NCMC reviews preparedness as Super Cyclonic Storm 'AMPHAN' set to make landfall on 20th May, 2020.

About the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC):

- The NCMC was constituted under the Cabinet Secretariat for effective implementation of relief measures in the wake of a natural calamity.
- Headed by the Cabinet Secretary, it is one of the top-level decision-making bodies with respect to disaster management.
- It oversees the command, control and coordination of disaster response.

73rd World Health Assembly

Context:

The Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare participated in the 73rd World Health Assembly (WHA) through video conference.

About the World Health Assembly (WHA):

- The World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of World Health Organisation (WHO).
- It is attended by delegations from all WHO Member States and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
- The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.
- At the Assembly, new health goals are set, and tasks are assigned in order to reach those goals.
- The Health Assembly is held annually in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The 73rd session of the WHA was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Initiatives to boost Education Sector

Context:

Union Finance Minister announces several initiatives to boost Education Sector.

Details:

- The initiatives announced under the themes "One nation, One digital platform" and "one class one channel" are aimed at boosting the access and equity in education and improving the gross enrolment ratio.
- A comprehensive initiative called **PM e-VIDYA** will be launched which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education. This will enable multi-mode access to education, and includes:
  - DIKSHA (one nation-one digital platform) which will now become the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content in school education for all the states/UTs. **Read more on DIKSHA at PIB dated 9 April, 2020.**
  - TV (one class-one channel) where one dedicated channel per grade for each of the classes 1 to 12 will provide access to quality educational material.
  - SWAYAM online courses in MOOCS format for school and higher education.
  - IITPAL for IITJEE/NEET preparation.
  - Air through Community radio and CBSE Shiksha Vani podcast.
  - Study material for the differently-abled developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language on NIOS website/YouTube.
- The **Manodarpan initiative** is being launched to provide psychosocial support through a website, a toll-free helpline, national directory of counsellors, interactive chat platform, etc. This initiative will benefit all school going children in the country, along with their parents, teachers and the community of stakeholders in school education.
- The government is expanding e-learning in higher education – by liberalizing open, distance and online education regulatory framework.
  - The top 100 universities will start online courses.
  - Also, online component in conventional Universities and ODL programmes will also be raised from present 20% to 40%.
  - This will provide enhanced learning opportunities to nearly 7 crore students across different colleges and Universities.
- It has been decided to prepare a new National Curriculum and Pedagogical Framework for school education, teacher education and early childhood stage to prepare students and future teachers as per global benchmarks.
  - The curriculum will be rooted in the Indian ethos and integrated with global skill requirement.
  - The focus will be on promoting critical thinking, creative and communication skills, along with experiential and joyful learning for the students focussing on learning outcomes.
- A National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission will be launched, for ensuring that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy in Grade 3 by 2025.