

29 May 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

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1. Finance Commission holds meeting with Ministry of Power on Power Sector Reforms

What's in News?

- The Finance Commission held a detailed meeting with the Power Ministry on issues relating to the Reforms of the Electricity Sector in the States.
- This was in continuation to the recommendations made on the power sector by the Finance Commission in its report for the financial year 2020-2021.

Details:

- The current disconnect in the structures of the power system between decision making by the State Government and the financial consequences thereof, which are borne by the DISCOMs, lead to losses.
- The Power Minister emphasized the need for the State Governments to be also conjointly responsible for the financial health of their fully owned DISCOMs.
 - It was suggested that towards this end, the borrowing limits of the State Governments under the [FRBM Act](#), needed to be recalibrated to take these liabilities into account.
 - This would bring to fore the responsibility of the State Governments under

whose control the DISCOMs operate.

- It would also bring financial transparency and bring about financially and managerially responsible behavior of the States with respect to DISCOMs.

Reforms in the pipeline for the turnaround of the DISCOMs:

- A new tariff policy which is under consideration for approval. It includes path breaking reforms in the power sector.
- Amendments are proposed to the Electricity Act of 2003.
- Old schemes of the Ministry are being amalgamated into a new scheme for which the Finance Commission's support of Rs. 3 lakh crores over a five year period would be required.
- This scheme would primarily focus on steps for reduction of losses, separate feeders for agriculture and smart prepaid meters.

Conclusion:

- 15th Finance Commission in its report for FY 2020-21 noted that most States have reduced, to some extent, their aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses and the difference between average cost of supply and average realizable revenue (ACS-ARR) after implementation of the [Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana](#) (UDAY) in 2016-17.
- However, the progress would not be sustainable unless systemic issues in the power sector are suitably addressed.
- Robust and systemic reforms are required to improve the health of the power sector.

Note:

Recently, the finance Minister announced Rs. 90,000 crores Liquidity Injection for Electricity Distribution Companies (DISCOMs), as one of the 15 measures in the first of the five tranches to combat the economic disruption from the coronavirus lockdown, which had stretched the finances of the Power DISCOMs.

Read more about the Economic Package announced as a part of the [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#).

2. Locust Control Operations

What's in News?

Locust control operations conducted today at 15 locations in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

This topic has been covered in 28th May 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](#) to read.

3. Index of Eight Core Industries

What's in News?

The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has released the Index of Eight Core Industries for the Month of April, 2020.

Details:

- The growth rate of Index of Eight Core Industries for April 2020 **declined by 38.1%** (provisional) compared to decline of 9% (provisional) during the month of March 2020.
- In view of nationwide lockdown during April 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic, various industries viz. Coal, Cement, Steel, Natural Gas, Refinery, Crude Oil etc experienced substantial loss of production.

Index of Industrial Production:

- The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Read more about the [Index of Industrial Production](#).

4. Mission Sagar

What's in News?

As part of Mission Sagar, Indian Naval Ship Kesari entered Port Antsiranana, Madagascar on 27th May 2020.

Details:

- The Government of India is providing assistance to friendly foreign countries in dealing with the [COVID-19](#) Pandemic.
- Towards one such effort, INS Kesari carried a consignment of COVID related essential

medicines for the people of Madagascar.

- The deployment also resonates with the vision of our Prime Minister of Security and Growth for All in the Region 'SAGAR' and highlights the importance accorded by India to relations with the countries of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Read more about Mission Sagar covered in [10th May 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

5. Missile Park 'Agneeprastha' to be set up at INS Kalinga

What's in News?

Foundation Stone for a Missile Park "AGNEEPRASTHA" has been laid at INS Kalinga.

Details:

- The Missile Park 'Agneeprastha' once completed will be dedicated to all the Officers, Sailors and Support Staff of INS Kalinga, who have served in this premier op-support Base of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) since its establishment in 1981.
 - The Park also commemorates the award of the prestigious Unit Citation to INS Kalinga for the year 2018-19.
 - 'Agneeprastha' aims to capture glimpses of Missile History of INS Kalinga since 1981 till date.
 - The Missile Park has been set up with a replica of missiles and Ground Support Equipment (GSE) that showcase the evolution of missiles handled by the unit.
 - The main attraction is P-70 'Ametist', an underwater launched anti-ship missile from the arsenal of the old 'Chakra' (Charlie-1 submarine) which was in service with IN during 1988-91.
 - 'AGNEEPRASTHA' will also provide a one-stop arena for motivation and stimulation of inquisitive minds regarding the missiles and related technologies.
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6. 2 MW Solar Power Plant inaugurated at INS Kalinga

What's in News?

In keeping with the initiative of Government of India to promote Solar Power and objective to achieve 100 GW of solar power by 2022 as part of the [National Solar Mission](#), a 2 MW

Solar Photovoltaic Plant was commissioned at INS Kalinga, Visakhapatnam.

- The plant, which is the largest in the Eastern Naval Command has an estimated life of 25 years.
 - INS Kalinga has taken significant strides in Green Initiatives since its setting up in the early 1980s, including afforestation, numerous plantation drives, coastal cleanup drives and protection of the Geo-Heritage site “Erra Matti Dibbalu”.
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7. Inclusion of 23 additional Minor Forest produce items in Minimum Support Price List

What’s in News?

Ministry of Tribal Affairs has announced Inclusion of 23 additional Minor Forest Produce (MFP) items and stipulation of their Minimum Support Price (MSP) under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme titled "Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of value chain of MFP".

Details:

- This decision enhances the coverage from 50 to 73 items.
- The announcement comes in view of the exceptional circumstances currently prevailing in the country on account of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the potential of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs scheme to offer the much needed support to the tribal MFP gatherers.
- The Ministry has provided flexibility to States to fix MSP upto 10% higher or lower than MSP declared by the Government.
- This notification is aimed to address several issues of exploitation by local traders, ensuring fair returns on their produce.

Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of value chain of MFP:

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- The Central Government had introduced a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for a select list of MFP through “Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce through Minimum Support price and development of Value Chain of MFP” Scheme in 2011 to provide a social safety net to these underprivileged forest dwellers, and to aid in their empowerment.

- TRIFED, as the apex national organisation involved in the improvement of the livelihood and empowerment of these tribal people, is the nodal agency for the implementation of the scheme.
 - The Scheme has been a resounding success in offering basic support to the tribal gatherers and has helped in improving their lives.
 - Vandhan Kendras have been set up as Tribal start-ups onboarding over 3.6 Lakhs beneficiaries.
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8. Researchers culture novel Coronavirus

What's in News?

The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) has established stable cultures of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) from patients' samples.

Details:

- Virologists at CCMB have isolated infectious viruses from several isolates.
- The ability to culture the virus in lab enables CCMB to work towards vaccine development and testing of potential drugs to fight COVID-19.

Novel coronavirus:

- Novel Coronavirus enters human cell by binding with the ACE-2 receptor on the cell surface.
 - Not all cells have ACE-2 receptors.
- Human epithelial cells in the respiratory tract copiously express ACE-2 receptors, causing respiratory disease in the infected patient.
 - However, human epithelial cells cannot be grown in lab.
- Currently, primary epithelial cells generated from human origins do not grow for many generations in labs, which is key to culturing viruses continuously. At the same time, the labs that are growing the virus need an 'immortal' cell line.
- They use Vero cells (kidney epithelial cell lines from green African monkey), which express ACE-2 proteins and carry a cell division that allows them to proliferate indefinitely.
- Using the Vero cell lines to grow the Coronavirus, CCMB is now in a position to isolate

and maintain viral strains from different regions.

Why cultivate a dreadful germ?

- If large amount of the virus are cultivated and are inactivated, they can be used as inactivated virus vaccine.
 - Once the inactivated virus is injected, the human immune system triggers the production of germ-specific antibodies.
 - One can inactivate the virus by heat or chemical means.
 - The inactivated virus can trigger antibody response, but does not infect and make the person sick as the virus cannot reproduce.
 - For the development of antibodies or antidotes, virus cultures are important. Inactivated viruses can trigger antibody response in other mammalian hosts in addition to humans.
 - Various such hosts are currently under test for their efficiency of antibody response.
 - Such antibodies generated in these non-human hosts can be purified, processed and collected.
 - The antibodies can be used as therapeutic intervention for patients suffering from the infection.
 - Such antibodies can trigger antiviral response upon injection into humans and have the potential of limiting the infection.
 - Administering antibodies does not provide immunity like a vaccine does, but can be considered as anti-dotes against the virus.
 - These cultures may also be helpful in the process of drug screening. Potential drugs can be tested against the virus in a test-tube for their efficacy.
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9. Jal Jeevan Mission in Chhattisgarh

What's in News?

- Chhattisgarh State presented their Annual Action Plan for 2020-21 for consideration and approval of Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- Subsequently, the Government of India has approved Rs 445 Crore for implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission in Chhattisgarh.

Jal Jeevan Mission

- Jal Jeevan Mission launched under the Ministry of Jal Shakti is aimed to provide adequate potable drinking water of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis to every rural household of the country by the 2024.
- A budget of whopping Rs 3.60 lakh Crore has been allocated for this scheme.

Read more about [Jal Jeevan Mission](#).
