

17 July 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

1. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

Context:

The enrolment of farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) for the Kharif-2020 season is going on in various States and UTs of the country.

To know more about the [Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana \(PMFBY\)](#), click on the linked article.

2. Atmanirbhar App Innovation Challenge

Context:

The government extends the last date for Atma Nirbhar App Innovation Challenge.

To know more about the Innovation Challenge, check [PIB dated Jul 4, 2020](#).

3. Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone

Context:

Approval accorded to the Zonal Master Plan of Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone.

About the Bhagirathi Eco-sensitive Zone:

- The Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone notification stretches from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi covering an area of 4179.59 sq km in the state of Uttarakhand.
- The zone notification was first issued by the Environment Ministry in December 2012.

Background:

- Since 2006, a huge public outcry against three bumper to bumper hydropower projects on the upper stretch of the Bhagirathi - Ganga was raised.
- After much deliberation, in 2010, the government decided to cancel the three projects to ensure the protection of the fragile area.
- The Government of India also decided to declare the approximately 135 km stretch from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi as an eco-sensitive zone under the Environmental Protection Act, 1986.
- With due consideration of the cultural significance of the origin path of the Ganga, the decision to preserve this last pristine stretch of the river Ganga was taken.
- Thus, the Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone notification is a notification meant for protecting the spiritual-cultural significance of the area and to protect/conservate the fragile ecology of the origin of the national river – Ganga.
- There were objections to the notification from Uttarakhand politicians citing it as anti-developmental.

- However, the stretch identified as eco-sensitive zone is of such fragile nature that it is not suited for the usual developmental activities being carried out elsewhere in the state.
- Moreover, the state has witnessed many disasters in the past that have claimed thousands of lives and have left the area vulnerable.
 - Over the last few years, the frequency & intensity of disasters in the state of Uttarakhand has consistently been increasing.
 - There have been flash floods and landslides, and also earthquakes with increased frequency.
 - Experts have repeatedly pointed out that an increased burden of anthropogenic activities lies at the root of this frequent destruction.

Also read about the National Ganga River Basin Project in [PIB dated July 7, 2020](#).

Ecological significance of the area:

- Located in the upper Himalayas, the notified area of the Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone is an interwoven, interdependent fragile Ganga-Himalayan Basin.
- Geographically, the area falls under the Garhwal lesser Himalayas and Higher Himalayas.
- High landslide-prone area
 - A significant part of the eco-sensitive zone area lies in high to very high hazard landslide zone.
 - After the recurrent disasters of 2012 and 2013, many old landslides have become active and many new landslides have also been seen.
 - It has been estimated that, on average, the damage caused by landslides in the Himalayan range costs more than US\$ 1 billion besides causing more than 200 deaths every year, which overall is considered as 30% of such types of losses occurring worldwide.
- High seismic sensitivity zone
 - The state of Uttarakhand is amongst the most seismically active states in the country.
 - There are many parallel thrusts & faults in the state.
- Hydrology of the area
 - The water sources of the Himalayan terrain are of great significance.
 - The upper reaches of the Himalayas are the recharge areas of the Tarai & Bhabhar water bodies in the plains.
 - Lying at the confluence of the Himalayas & the Indo-Gangetic basin, the Tarai & Bhabhar regions carry the fertile alluvial silt of the waters from the upper reaches that brings rich fertility to this area and carry it further downstream.
 - Hydrogeological connectivity of the entire basin is very crucial and cannot be ignored.
 - The hydrogeological network is also linked to flora and fauna. Thus, it is an important and integral component of the entire ecological system of the area and cannot be ignored.

Cultural significance of the area:

- Being the origin valley of the river Ganga, Uttarkashi is of immense cultural significance.
- Uttarkashi (literally Kashi of the north) is considered a sacred place for Hindu pilgrimage.
- Gaumukh is the terminus or pout of the Gangotri glacier and the source of the Bhagirathi river. This is the place where the holy Ganga river originates and is hence of great significance.
- There are many historically and culturally significant places along the Bhagirathi river.

4. PM SVANidhi

Context:

Mobile App of PM SVANidhi launched.

To know more about PM SVANidhi, check [PIB dated June 1, 2020](#).

5. Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration Scheme 2020

Context:

It was decided, at the National Ganga Council in 2019, to create a “Good Performance for Ganga Rejuvenation” award for the Ganga districts under the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence for Public Administration Scheme.

Details:

- This year, for the very first time, the PM's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration seeks to recognize the efforts of District level officials involved in the Namami Gange Programme.
- Under this award category, one award shall be given to a district out of the 57 notified District Ganga Committees under the Namami Gange Programme.
 - The District Ganga Committee (DGC) is an authority, created in 2016 under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, at the district level for addressing the problem of pollution abatement of the River Ganga.
- Under the scheme, 57 District Ganga Committees on the Ganga main stem and tributaries have been included as a separate category for PM's awards for excellence in Public Administration by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).
- The evaluation criteria for the award includes cleanliness, plantation drives, protection of aquatic life and biodiversity conservation, among others.

About the PM's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration:

- This award scheme was initiated in 2006 to acknowledge, recognize and reward the extraordinary and innovative work done by Districts/Organizations of the Central and State Governments.
- The Scheme was restructured in 2014 for recognizing the performance of District Collectors in Priority Programmes, Innovations and Aspirational Districts and was further restructured in 2020 to recognize the performance of District Collectors towards economic development of the District.
- For the year 2020, the scope of the awards has been expanded to identify areas of overall outcome-oriented performance in the districts across sectors.

6. Chardham All Weather Road Project

Context:

Union Minister reviewed the Chardham All Weather Road Project.

To know more about the Chardham Project, check [PIB dated May 26, 2020](#).

7. U.S.-India Strategy Energy Partnership (SEP)

Context:

The 2nd ministerial meeting of the U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP) held.

Details:

- The SEP was established in 2018 at the direction of President Trump and Prime Minister Modi, recognizing the strategic importance of energy to the U.S.-India bilateral relationship.
- The SEP builds upon our longstanding energy partnership and sets the stage for meaningful engagements through robust government-to-government cooperation and industry engagement.
- The SEP organizes inter-agency engagement on both sides across four primary pillars of cooperation:
 - Power and Energy Efficiency
 - Oil and Gas
 - Renewable Energy
 - Sustainable Growth.
- Through these pillars, the United States and India are working to strengthen and modernize the power grid and distribution utilities for clean, affordable, and reliable energy access; improve efficiency, flexibility, and environmental performance in the power sector; promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth through long-term energy development; enhance energy security through oil and gas trade, and infrastructure investment; advance the development, deployment, and integration of renewable energy and expand access to finance for renewable energy projects; and reduce market barriers to energy trade and investment.
- The two countries are also leading joint research and development (R&D) through the **S.-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy-Research (PACE-R)** on smart grids and energy storage to increase resilience and reliability of the electric grid.

Outcomes of the SEP:

- The two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding to begin cooperation on Strategic Petroleum Reserves operation and maintenance, including the exchange of information and best practices.
 - They also discussed the possibility of India storing oil in the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve to increase their nations' strategic oil stockpile.
- The sides launched a public-private **Hydrogen Task Force** to help scale up technologies to produce hydrogen from renewable energy and fossil fuel sources and to bring down the cost of deployment for enhanced energy security and resiliency.
- They also signed an MOU to collaborate on India's first-ever **Solar Decathlon India** in 2021, establishing a collegiate competition to prepare the next generation of building professionals to design and build high-efficiency buildings powered by renewables.
- The two sides agreed to collaborate on advanced high-efficiency coal technologies with low-to-zero emissions through carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS).
- Several other agreements were signed between agencies of both countries in the field of energy to advance the strategic and economic interests of both countries.

