18 Aug 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

1. Swachh Survekshan 2020

Context:

Results of the Swachh Survekshan 2020 to be announced by the Prime Minister.

Details:

- A total of 129 awards will be handed over to the top-performing cities and states in the programme, titled "Swachh Mahotsav".
- Swachh Survekshan 2020 is the world's largest cleanliness survey.
    - It ranked a total of 4,242 cities, 62 Cantonment Boards and 92 Ganga Towns and saw the participation of 1.87 crore citizens.
- The Swachch Mahotsav is being organised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has been conducting the Swachh Survekshan since 2016 to encourage cities to improve urban sanitation.
- The competition has been able to imbibe a spirit of healthy competition among the citizens with respect to improving the cleanliness of their cities.

Also read: Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

2. Exports of agricultural commodities

Context:

Exports of agricultural commodities from March to June 2020 increased by 23.24% compared to the corresponding period in 2019.

Details:

- As per WTO's Trade Statistics, the share of India's agricultural exports and imports in the world agriculture trade in 2017 was 2.27% and 1.90%, respectively.
- Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, India continued to export.
- Agricultural exports as a percentage of India's agricultural GDP has increased from 9.4 % in 2017-18 to 9.9 % in 2018-19.
- The agricultural imports as a percentage of India's agricultural GDP have declined from 5.7 % to 4.9 % indicating **exportable surplus and decreased dependence on import of agricultural products in India**.

Concerns:

- India has made giant strides in agriculture since independence, both in production and exports.
- While India ranks among the top nations in the production of many agricultural goods, it does not figure in the top when it comes to agri exports.
- For example, India holds the second rank in the world wheat production but ranks 34th in export. Similarly, despite being world No. 3 in the production of vegetables, the export ranking of India is

only 14th. The same is the case for fruits, where India is the second-largest producer in the world but the export ranking is 23rd.

Interventions by the DAC&FW:

- The Department of Agriculture Cooperation & Farmers' Welfare (DAC&FW) has prepared a comprehensive action plan/strategy towards the promotion of agri trade.
- A detailed exploration of data and issues of pre-production, production, and post-harvest has been undertaken to evolve an end to end approach for developing a holistic strategy.
- An analysis of product groups and specific commodities has been done with regard to the present status of production & exports, strengths, challenges and thereafter interventions have been identified after consultations with stakeholders.
- The twofold approach addresses boosting Agri Export with emphasis on value addition and focussed action plan for Import Substitution. The interventions so identified have been converted into a timed action plan.
- A few focus areas of agri exports are:
    o Fast evolving niche markets of wellness food/health-conscious food/nutraceuticals.
    o Development of **"Brand India"** in campaign mode to help penetration into new foreign markets and of new products which automatically translates into higher value realisation.
    o Gulf countries have been identified as a focus destination.

Horticulture:

- This is a growing sub-sector.
- India holds the 2nd position in the production of fruits and vegetables.
- It also exports fruits and vegetables worth more than Rs5000 crore annually.
- Grapes occupy the premier position in fresh fruit exports followed by Mango, Pomegranate, Banana, and Oranges. In the fresh vegetable export basket, Onions, Mixed Vegetables, Potatoes, Tomatoes, and Green Chillies are the major items.
- However, India's share in the world trade of fruits and vegetables in minuscule. There is a huge potential in this area.

To read more related information, with regard to the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, check CNA dated Aug 17, 2020: New agriculture infrastructure fund is a major step forward.

3. Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge

Context:

Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge launched by the Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology.

About Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge:

- The 'Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge - Innovate Solutions for #Aatmanirbhar Bharat' has been launched to provide an impetus to the ecosystem of start-up, innovation and research in India.
- The challenge invites innovators, start-ups and students to use two microprocessors (developed by IIT Madras and Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC)) to develop various technology products.
- The two microprocessors are:

- o SHAKTI (32 bit)
- o VEGA (64 bit)
- The microprocessors were developed using Open Source Architecture under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and IT.
- This initiative is aimed at not only meeting India's future requirements of strategic and industrial sectors but also to potentially mitigate the issues of security, licensing, technology obsolescence and most crucially cutting dependency on imports.
- The challenge will be spread over ten months and the finalists can win financial and incubation support for their ideas.

4. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)

Context:

All regional offices of the Ministry brought under one roof.

Details:

- The MoEF&CC has approved the establishment of 19 Integrated Regional Offices (IROs).
- The IROs will be established by redeploying and redistributing human and other resources of the following:
    - o 10 Regional Offices of ROHQ Division
    - o 4 Regional Offices of Forest Survey of India (FSI)
    - o 3 Regional Centres of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)
    - o 4 Regional Offices of Central Zoo Authority (CZA)
    - o 5 Regional Offices & 3 Sub-regional Offices of Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)
- The purpose of this reorganisation is to achieve improved outcomes with respect to the Ministry's mandates in an improved, timely and effective manner.
- It also aims at enhancing its outreach to stakeholders, undertaking coordinated action and optimizing the utilization of available resources.
- The head of each of the IRO will be called "Regional Officer" of MoEF&CC.

5. Drone based surveillance system for Railway Security

Context:

Indian Railways introduces drone-based surveillance system for Railway Security.

Details:

- The Mumbai Division of Central Railway in Indian Railways has recently procured two **Ninja UAVs** for better security and surveillance in railway areas like station premises, railway track sections, yards, workshops, etc.
- A team of four staff of the Railway Protection Force (RPF), Mumbai has been trained for drone flying, surveillance and maintenance.
- These drones are capable of Real-Time Tracking, Video Streaming and may be operated on Automatic Fail Safe Mode.

- So far, nine drones have been procured by the RPF and there are plans for buying 17 more in the future.

Uses of the drones:

- The purpose of the drone deployment is to provide a force multiplier and aid to the effectiveness of the security personnel deployed.
- It can help in the inspection of railway assets and safety of yards, workshops, car sheds, etc.
- It can be used to launch surveillance on criminal and anti-social activities like gambling, throwing of garbage, hawking, etc. in the railway premises.
- It may be deployed for data collection. Analysis of such data collected may prove to be extremely useful in vulnerable sections for safe operations of trains.
- The drones may also be pressed in service at disaster sites for helping in rescue, recovery and restoration and coordination of efforts of various agencies.
- They are very useful while undertaking mapping of railway assets to assess the encroachments on railway property.
- During large scale crowd management efforts, it may give vital inputs like crowd magnitude, probable time of arrival and dispersal based on which crowd regulation efforts may be planned and executed.
- A drone camera can cover a large area that requires 8-10 RPF personnel. Thus, it may lead to substantial improvement in utilization of scarce manpower.

6. Invisible shield for electromagnetic interference

Context:

Bengaluru scientists fabricate invisible shield for electromagnetic interference.

Details:

- Scientists from Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS), Bengaluru, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India have fabricated transparent and flexible EMI shields made of metal meshes using the crack templating method via spray coating which is pioneered in their laboratory.
- They have designed a transparent shield for electromagnetic interference (EMI) by designing a metal mesh structure instead of continuous film on desired transparent substrates.
- Metal mesh provides better electromagnetic shielding compared to the same thickness of continuous metal film where transparency can be compromised.
- The invisible shield can be used in various military stealth applications and can cover electromagnetic wave emitter or absorber devices without compromising their aesthetics.
- This metal mesh can be created on any desired substrates such as acrylic, polycarbonate, glass, etc. without compromising the conductivity of the electrodes.

7. Indo-US Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF)

Context:

Awards announced for Indo-U.S. Virtual Networks for COVID-19.

Details:

- Eight binational teams consisting of researchers from India and the US have received awards to pursue cutting-edge research in pathogenesis and disease management of COVID-19 through Indo-US virtual networks.
- The areas of research they will pursue include antiviral coatings, immune modulation, tracking SARS CoV-2 in wastewater, disease detection mechanisms, reverse genetics strategies, and drug repurposing.
- The awards were announced by the IUSSTF.

To know more about the IUSSTF, check PIB dated Aug 13, 2020.