

07 Oct 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

1. Stockholm Convention

Context:

Cabinet approves the ratification of seven Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) listed under the Stockholm Convention.

Details:

- The Union Cabinet has approved the ratification of seven chemicals listed under the [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants](#) (POPs).
- The Cabinet further delegated its powers to ratify chemicals under the Stockholm Convention to the Union Ministers of External Affairs (MEA) and Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in respect of POPs already regulated under the domestic regulations.

Background:

- The Stockholm Convention is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from POPs.
- POPs are identified chemical substances that persist in the environment, bio-accumulate in living organisms, adversely affect human health/environment and have the property of long-range environmental transport (LRET).
- Exposure to POPs can lead to cancer, damage central & peripheral nervous systems, cause diseases of the immune system, lead to reproductive disorders and interfere with normal infant and child development.
- POPs are listed in various Annexes to the Convention after thorough scientific research, deliberations and negotiations among member countries.

India and Stockholm Convention:

- India ratified the Stockholm Convention in 2006 as per Article 25(4).
 - This enabled India to keep itself in a default "opt-out" position such that amendments in various Annexes of the Convention cannot be enforced on it unless an instrument of ratification/acceptance/approval or accession is explicitly deposited with the UN depositary.

Banned chemicals:

- The MoEFCC had notified the 'Regulation of Persistent Organic Pollutants Rules' in 2018 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The regulation prohibited the manufacture, trade, use, import and export of seven chemicals namely,
 - Chlordecone
 - Hexabromobiphenyl
 - Hexabromodiphenyl ether and Heptabromodiphenylether (Commercial octa-BDE)
 - Tetrabromodiphenyl ether and Pentabromodiphenyl ether (Commercial penta-BDE)
 - Pentachlorobenzene
 - Hexabromocyclododecane
 - Hexachlorobutadiene
- These chemicals are listed as POPs under the Convention.

2. MoC between India and Japan

Context:

The signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in the field of Cybersecurity between India and Japan.

Details:

- The MoC will enhance cooperation in areas of mutual interest, which include among others,
 - Capacity building in the area of cyberspace
 - Protection of critical infrastructure
 - Cooperation in emerging technologies
 - Sharing information on cybersecurity threats/incidents and malicious cyber activities, as well as best practices to counter them
 - Developing joint mechanisms for practical cooperation to mitigate cyber threats to the security of Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, etc.
- Under the agreement, India and Japan commit to an open, interoperable, free, fair, secure and reliable cyberspace environment and to promote the Internet as an engine of innovation, economic growth, and trade and commerce that would be consistent with their respective domestic laws and international obligations, and with their wide-ranging strategic partnership.

3. Zoological Survey of India

Context:

MoU between the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and International Barcode of Life.

Details:

- The Union Cabinet has approved an MoU between the ZSI and International Barcode of Life (iBOL), a Canadian not-for-profit organisation.
- ZSI and iBOL have come together for further efforts in **DNA barcoding**, a methodology for rapidly and accurately identifying species by sequencing a short segment of standardized gene regions and comparing individual sequences to a reference database.
- **iBOL** – it is a research alliance involving nations that have committed both human and financial resources to enable expansion of the global reference database, the development of informatics platforms, and/or the analytical protocols needed to use the reference library to inventory, assess, and describe biodiversity.

Know more about the [Zoological Survey of India](#) in the linked article.

4. Natural Gas Marketing Reforms

Context:

Cabinet approves 'Natural Gas Marketing Reforms'.

Objective of the reforms:

- The objective of the policy is to prescribe the standard procedure to discover the market price of gas to be sold in the market by gas producers, through a transparent and competitive process, permit affiliates to participate in the bidding process for the sale of gas and allow marketing freedom to certain Field Development Plans (FDPs) where Production Sharing Contracts already provide pricing freedom.
- The policy aims to provide a standard procedure for the sale of natural gas in a transparent and competitive manner to discover market price by issuing guidelines for sale by contractor through e-bidding.
- This will bring uniformity in the bidding process across the various contractual regimes and policies to avoid ambiguity and contribute towards ease of doing business.

Details of the policy:

- The policy has also permitted affiliate companies to participate in the bidding process - open, transparent and electronic bidding. This will facilitate and promote more competition in the marketing of gas.
- However, rebidding will have to be done in case only affiliates participate, and there are no other bidders.
- The policy will also grant marketing freedom to the Field Development Plans (FDPs) of those Blocks in which Production Sharing Contracts already provide pricing freedom.

Benefits of the reforms:

- The domestic gas production has complete marketing and pricing freedom. All discoveries and field development plans approved after February 2019 have a complete market and pricing freedom.
- The whole ecosystem of policies relating to production, infrastructure and marketing of natural gas has been made more transparent with a focus on ease of doing business.
- These reforms will prove very significant for Atmanirbhar Bharat by encouraging investments in the domestic production of natural gas and reducing import dependence.
- These reforms will prove to be another milestone in moving towards a gas-based economy by encouraging investments.
- The increased gas production and consumption will help in the improvement of the environment.
- These reforms will also help in creating employment opportunities in the gas-consuming sectors including MSMEs.
- The domestic production will further help in increasing investment in the downstream industries such as city gas distribution and related industries.

5. Aero India 2021

Context:

Defence Minister chairs Ambassadors' Round-table Virtual Conference on Aero India 2021.

About Aero India Show:

- The Aero India exhibition is organized every alternate year.

- It is a major exhibition for the aerospace and defence industries with a public air show.
- It enables industry professionals to gain market insights, announce new developments and gain media coverage.
- Aero India offers a unique platform to the international aviation sector to bolster business.
- Aero India 2021 is the 13th edition of Aero India being organised at Bengaluru, Karnataka in February 2021.
- Aero India 2021 provides an opportunity to demonstrate products to potential customers and investors.
- Aero India shows are organised by the Department of Defence Production, Defence Ministry.
- The theme of Aero India 2021 is 'The runway to a billion opportunities'.

6. Rapid Action Force (RAF)

Context:

28th anniversary of the RAF.

About the Rapid Action Force (RAF):

- The RAF is a specialised force raised in October 1992 initially with 10 unattached battalions.
- These units were set up to deal with riots and riot-like situations, to instill confidence amongst all sections of the society and also, handle internal security duty.
- RAF is a specialised wing of the [CRPF](#).
- RAF is a zero response force that gets to the crisis situation within a minimal time, thus enthuses an immediate sense of security and confidence amongst the general public.
- Currently, the RAF has 15 battalions and is headed by an officer of the rank of Inspector General.

7. World Cotton Day

Context:

The second World Cotton Day was observed on 7th October 2020.

About World Cotton Day:

- 7th October is observed as World Cotton Day.
- For more on the World Cotton Day, check [PIB dated Oct 4, 2019](#), under the heading 'World Cotton Day'.

Kasturi Cotton:

- On the occasion of the second World Cotton Day, the Union Textiles Minister launched the first-ever brand and logo for Indian cotton.
- Now India's premium cotton would be known as 'Kasturi Cotton' in the world cotton trade.
- The Kasturi Cotton brand will represent Whiteness, Brightness, Softness, Purity, Lustre, Uniqueness and Indianness.

- Cotton is one of the principal commercial crops of India and it provides livelihood to about 6 million cotton farmers.
- India is the 2nd largest cotton producer and the largest consumer of cotton in the world.
- India produces about 6 million tons of cotton every year which is about 23% of the world cotton.
- India accounts for about 51% of the total organic cotton production of the world, which demonstrates India's effort towards sustainability.

