



Daily Current Affairs

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PM lays foundation stone to mark the commencement of work for 9th round of City Gas Distribution

Why in news?

The Prime Minister, laid the foundation stone through video conferencing, to mark the commencement of work for City Gas Distribution (CGD), awarded under the 9th CGD bidding round in New Delhi.

Highlights and Importance of City Gas Distribution:

- PM pointed out the various steps taken by the Union Government to strengthen the Gas infrastructure in the country, especially increasing the number of LNG terminals, creating nation-wide Gas Grid and creation of City Gas Distribution Network.
- CGD network will play a major role in achieving Clean Energy solutions.
- The Prime Minister said that more than twelve crore LPG connections were provided in the last four years.
- He mentioned that Gas networks in cities create a new ecosystem, one that enables gas based industries, generates employment to youth and provides ease of living to citizens.

Other Clean Energy initiatives of the Union Government:

Ethanol Blending:

- Ethanol blending is the practice of blending petrol with ethanol. Many countries, including India, have adopted ethanol blending in petrol in order to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions and also to reduce the import burden on account of crude petroleum from which petrol is produced.

- It is estimated that a 5% blending (105 crore litres) can result in replacement of around 1.8 million Barrels of crude oil .
- The renewable ethanol content, which is a by product of the sugar industry, is expected to result in a net reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrocarbons (HC).
- Ethanol itself burns cleaner and burns more completely than petrol it is blended into. In India, ethanol is mainly derived by sugarcane molasses, which is a by-product in the conversion of sugar cane juice to sugar.

Compressed Bio Gas plants:

- Bio-CNG is the purified form of biogas, without other gaseous impurities. It is very similar to natural gas in its composition and energy potential, is a renewable energy source, eco-friendly and can replace LPG and CNG easily.
- It is also very cost-effective to produce, making it one of the cheaper fuels.
- In Bio-CNG production, biogas is cleaned of hydrogen & carbon-dioxide to produce 95% methane gas. This pure gas is compressed and bottled for transportation and usage.
- Others are increased LPG coverage and introduction of BS-6 fuels for automobiles.

Cabinet apprised of the MoU between Atal Innovation Mission, India and Fund "Talent and Success"

Why in news?

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has been apprised of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Atal Innovation Mission, India and Fund "Talent and Success", Russia for promotion of science & technology, strong foundation to the collaborative work through exchange of students, teachers, researchers and scientists between both countries.

Benefits:

The MoU will facilitate promotion of science & technology, strong foundation to the collaborative work through exchange of students, teachers, researchers and scientists between India and Russia.

Major Impact:

- The MOU will provide a mechanism in taking part in establishing relationships with-schools, universities, cultural institutions, science & technology and specialized education institutions, high-tech companies, startups and innovation centers in both countries.
- The activities are expected to promote creation of new scientific knowledge, generation of intellectual property, innovations and products development in both countries.

Background:

- Prime Minister during his visit to Russia during 23-24th December, 2015 visited Sirius Educational Centre in Sochi wherein, it was proposed to invite the Russian students to India to work with Indian students.
- As a prelude to the recent visit of President of Russia Viadimir Putin in October 2018, ten Russian students visited India to work with ten Indian students from five Atal Tinkering Lab schools in an Innovation Boot Camp at IIT, Delhi during October 1-4, 2018.
- The students worked on innovative concepts for exploring development of new prototypes in five sectors; healthcare, space technology, clean technology, agri-technology and smart mobility. The prototypes developed were exhibited by the young student innovators before Prime Minister of India and President of Russia Vladimir Putin and on 5th October, 2018

Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)

Why in news?

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has said in Fifth World Fisheries Day that the Blue Revolution mission aims at doubling the income of farmers and in the last four & half years, Rs 1915.33 crore has been released for the implementation of Blue Revolution schemes.

Highlights:

- Under the Blue Revolution scheme, 29,128 hectares has been developed for aquaculture and fishermen are being benefitted.
- Besides, 7441 traditional boats have been modernized and converted into motorized boats.
- The government has approved Rs 7522 crore Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF).
- This fund will create employment opportunities to over 9.40 lakhs fishers/ fishermen/ fisher folks and other entrepreneurs in fishing and allied activities and attract private investment in creation and management of fisheries infrastructure facilities.
- FIDF would help in the creation of fisheries infrastructure facilities both in marine and inland fisheries sectors, which would boast fish production and help achieve target of Rs 15 million tonne by 2020 set under Blue revolution.
- Besides, the FIDF aims to achieve a sustainable growth of 8 % to 9 % in a move to augment fish production to the level of about 20 million tonnes by 2022-23.

About World Fisheries Day:

World Fisheries Day is being celebrated to commemorate the event of meeting of the working fishermen and women representing 'World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers' from 18 countries in New Delhi on November 21, 1997.

'World Fisheries Forum (WFF)' was established to advocate a global mandate of sustainable fishing practices and policies.

India gets UN Environment award for combating transboundary environmental crime

Why in news?

United Nation Environment has awarded Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India with Asia Environment Enforcement Awards, 2018 for excellent work done by the Bureau in combating transboundary environmental crime.

About Asia Environment Enforcement Awards:

- The Asia Environment Enforcement Awards publicly recognize and celebrate excellence in enforcement by government officials and institutions/teams combating transboundary environmental crime in Asia.
- The awards are given to outstanding individuals and/or government organizations/teams that demonstrate excellence and leadership in enforcement of national laws to combat transboundary environmental crime in one of the following eligibility criteria areas: collaboration; impact; innovation; integrity and gender leadership.
- WCCB has been conferred this award in Innovation category. WCCB has adopted innovative enforcement techniques that have dramatically increased enforcement of transboundary environmental crimes in India.
- Notably it has developed an online Wildlife Crime Database Management System to get real time data in order to help analyze trends in crime and devise effective measures to prevent and detect wildlife crimes across India.

About Wildlife Crime Control Bureau:

- Wildlife Crime Control Bureau is a statutory multi-disciplinary body established by the Government of India under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, to combat organized wildlife crime in the country.
- The Bureau has its headquarter in New Delhi and five regional offices at Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Jabalpur; three sub-regional offices at Guwahati, Amritsar and Cochin; and five border units at Ramanathapuram, Gorakhpur, Motihari, Nathula and Moreh.
- Under Section 38 (Z) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, it is

mandated

1. to collect and collate intelligence related to organized wildlife crime activities and to disseminate the same to State and other enforcement agencies for immediate action so as to apprehend the criminals;
2. to establish a centralized wildlife crime data bank; co-ordinate actions by various agencies in connection with the enforcement of the provisions of the Act;
3. assist foreign authorities and international organization concerned to facilitate co-ordination and universal action for wildlife crime control;
4. capacity building of the wildlife crime enforcement agencies for scientific and professional investigation into wildlife crimes and assist State Governments to ensure success in prosecutions related to wildlife crimes;
5. advise the Government of India on issues relating to wildlife crimes having national and international ramifications, relevant policy and laws.
6. It also assists and advises the Customs authorities in inspection of the consignments of flora & fauna as per the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act, CITES and EXIM Policy governing such an item.

WCCB has successfully carrying out operations such as Operation SAVE KURMA, THUNDERBIRD, WILDNET, LESKNOW, BIRBIL, THUNDERSTORM, LESKNOW-II along with other enforcement agencies resulting in the arrest of 350 wildlife criminals and huge seizures of Tiger/Leopard Skin/bones and other trophies, Rhino Horn, Elephant Ivory, turtles/tortoises, Mongoose raw hairs as well as Mongoose hair bruses, protected birds, Marine products, live Pangolin as well as its scales, deer antlers etc. across all the states.

Cabinet approves Implementation of the umbrella scheme "Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services"

Why in news?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister has approved continuation of the nine sub-schemes of the

umbrella scheme "Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS)" during 2017-2020 at an estimated cost of Rs. 1450 crore.

Impact:

The scheme will provide improved weather, climate and ocean forecast and services, thereby ensuring transfer of commensurate benefits to the various services like Public weather service, disaster management, Agro-meteorological Services, Aviation services, Environmental monitoring services, Hydro-meteorological services, climate services, tourism, pilgrimage, power generation, water management, Sports & adventure etc.

Generating employment opportunities:

- A sizable number of scientific and technical staff along with requisite administrative support, thereby generating employment.
- To ensure last-mile connectivity of the weather based services to the end -user, a large number of agencies like the Krishi Vigyana Kendras of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Universities and local municipalities are roped in thus generating employment opportunities to many people.

Details:

- ACROSS scheme pertains to the atmospheric science programs of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and addresses different aspects of weather and climate services, which includes warnings for cyclone, storm surges, heat waves, thunderstorms etc.
- Each of these aspects is incorporated as nine sub-schemes under the umbrella scheme "ACROSS" and is implemented in an integrated manner through the aforesaid four institutes.
- The ACROSS scheme consists of nine sub-programmes which are multi disciplinary and multi institutional in nature and will be implemented in an integrated manner through IMD, HIM, NCMRWF and INCOIS.

Objective of the ACROSS scheme:

To provide a reliable weather and climate forecast for betterment of

society, the scheme will aim at improving skill of weather and climate forecast through sustained observations, intensive R & D, and by adopting effective dissemination and communication strategies to ensure its timely reach to the end-user of all services like Agro-meteorological Services, Aviation service, Environmental monitoring services, Hydro-meteorological services, climate services, tourism, pilgrimage, mountaineering etc.,

Background:

- The Ministry of Earth Sciences has a mandate to carry out research and development activities to develop and improve capability to forecast weather, climate and natural hazard related phenomena.
- Towards this direction, MoES has taken several initiatives to formulate specific schemes like augmentation of observing systems and infrastructure, understanding processes through special campaigns, weather and climate modelling, monsoon-research, climate change science & climate services etc.
- These schemes involve multi-institutes wherein each unit has a designated role for accomplishing the aforesaid tasks. As a result, all these schemes with specific objectives and budget are implemented in an integrated manner and are put together under the umbrella scheme "ACROSS".

Implementation:

It will be implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences through its institutes namely India Meteorological Department (IMD), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), and Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Service(INCOIS).
