



Daily Current Affairs

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Long-Range Missile Agni V

Why in news?

Agni V, a long-range surface-to-surface Nuclear Capable Ballistic missile, was successfully launched from a canister on a road mobile launcher at the Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.

About Agni V:

- Agni-V is an intercontinental ballistic missile developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India.
- Agni V is part of the Agni series of missiles, one of the missile systems under the original Integrated Guided Missile Development Program.
- Agni-V is a three stage missile, 17 metres tall, two metres wide and capable of carrying 1.5 tonne of nuclear warheads.
- Missile Agni-5, which has a strike range of 5,000 km and Surface to surface missile.
- Unlike other missiles of the series, Agni-5 is the most-advanced in terms of navigation and guidance, warhead and engine.

National Pension System (NPS)

Why in news?

Recently The Union Cabinet has approved the following proposal for streamlining the National Pension System (NPS).

Major Decisions:

- Enhancement of the mandatory contribution by the Central Government for its employees covered under NPS Tier-I from the existing 10% to 14%.
- Providing freedom of choice for selection of Pension Funds and pattern of investment to central government employees.
- Payment of compensation for non-deposit or delayed deposit of NPS contributions during 2004-2012.
- Tax exemption limit for lump sum withdrawal on exit has been enhanced to 60%. With this, the entire withdrawal will now be exempt from income tax. (At present, 40% of the total accumulated corpus utilized for purchase of annuity is already tax exempted. Out of 60% of the accumulated corpus withdrawn by the NPS subscriber at the time of retirement, 40% is tax exempt and balance 20% is taxable.)
- Contribution by the Government employees under Tier-II of NPS will now be covered under Section 80 C for deduction up to Rs. 1.50 lakh for the purpose of income tax at par with the other schemes such as General Provident Fund, Contributory Provident Fund, Employees Provident Fund and Public Provident Fund provided that there is a lock-in period of 3 years.

About NPS:

- National Pension System (NPS) is a pension cum investment scheme launched by Government of India to provide old age security to Citizens of India.
- It brings an attractive long term saving avenue to effectively plan your retirement through safe and regulated market-based return. The Scheme is regulated by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA). National Pension System Trust (NPST) established by PFRDA is the registered owner of all assets under NPS.

Major impact of the decision:

- Increase in the eventual accumulated corpus of all central government employees covered under NPS.
- Greater pension payouts after retirement without any additional burden on the employee.
- Freedom of choice for selection of Pension Funds and investment

- pattern to central government employees.
 - Benefit to approximately 18 lakh central government employees covered under NPS.
 - Augmenting old-age security in a time of rising life expectancy.
 - By making NPS more attractive, government will be facilitated in attracting and retaining the best talent.
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Human Rights Day

Why in news?

Recently India has celebrated Human Rights Day.

Highlights:

- Human Rights Day Function, organised in New Delhi by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Union Minister for Minority Affairs called for strict punishment to terrorists who kill innocent people and don't deserve any "cover or privilege" of human rights.
- Terrorist organizations and some anti-social elements consider killing of civilians, attacking the security forces, spreading terror and conspiring to disturb peace of the world as their "human rights".
- Social, economic, religious and other human rights of every community are more safe and secure in India than any other democratic country of the world.
- Tolerance and communal and social harmony is in the DNA of India. Social and cultural harmony is the source of unity of India despite of various languages, religions and communities.
- During the last 25 years, since its inception, the National Human Rights Commission has endeavoured to promote a culture of human rights. The Commission has established tremendous trust among the common people.
- The common man approaches the NHRC without any fear. Global network of National Human Rights Institutions have been accredited the NHRC with "A Status" throughout its since its inception.

About NHRC:

- The National Human Rights Commission is a statutory (and not constitutional) body. It was established in 1993 under a legislation enacted by the Parliament, namely, the Protection of Human Rights Act 1991. This Act was amended in 2006.
- The commission is the watchdog of human rights in the country, that is, the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India.

The specific objectives of the establishment of the commission are 3 :

(a) To strengthen the institutional arrangements through which human rights issues could be addressed in their entirety in a more focussed manner;

(b) To look into allegations of excesses, independently of the government, in a manner that would underline the government's commitment to protect human rights; and

(c) To complement and strengthen the efforts that have already been made in this direction.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

The functions of the Commission are:

(a) To inquire into any violation of human rights or negligence in the prevention of such violation by a public servant, either suo motu or on a petition presented to it or on an order of a court.

(b) To intervene in any proceeding involving allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court.

(c) To visit jails and detention places to study the living conditions of inmates and make recommendation thereon.

(d) To review the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the protection of human rights and recommend measures for their effective implementation.

(e) To review the factors including acts of terrorism that inhibit the

enjoyment of human rights and recommend remedial measures.

(f) To study treaties and other international instruments on human rights and make recommendations for their effective implementation.

(g) To undertake and promote research in the field of human rights.

(h) To spread human rights literacy among the people and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights.

(i) To encourage the efforts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the field of human rights.

(j) To undertake such other functions as it may consider necessary for the promotion of human rights.

Renewable energy

Why in news?

In Year End Review 2018 of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, India attains global 4th and 5th positions in wind and solar power installed capacities; India now at 5th global position for overall installed renewable energy capacity.

Highlights:

- India has 5th Global position for overall installed renewable energy capacity, 4th position for wind power and 5th position for solar power.
- Registered lowest ever solar tariffs in India of Rs.2.44 per unit in reverse auctions carried out by Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) in May 2017, for 200 MW and again in July, 2018, for 600 MW. Registered lowest ever wind tariff of Rs.2.43 per unit in a tender of 500 MW project by Gujarat Government in the month of December 2017.

SOLAR ENERGY

- The Government has revised the target of Grid Connected Solar Power Projects from 20,000 MW by the year 2021-22 to 100,000 MW by the year 2021-22 under the National Solar Mission.
- The country currently has the fifth highest solar installed capacity in the world with total installed capacity of 24.33 GW as on October, 2018 against a target of 100 GW by 2022. Further, 22.8 GW capacity is under implementation or have been tendered out.
- The Ministry plans to bid out remaining solar power capacity in 2018-19 and 2019-20, so that bidding gets completed for entire 100 GW capacity additions by March 2020, leaving two years' time for execution of projects.
- The tariff for grid-connected solar power projects is determined through competitive bidding process involving reverse e-auction. This has helped in bringing down the tariff significantly. The lowest solar tariff discovered as on date is Rs. 2.44/kWh in July 2018 in ISTS based bidding of solar projects in India.
- The solar tariff has come down from around Rs 18/kWh in 2010 to Rs. 2.44/kWh in 2018 due to various factors like economies of scale, assured availability of land and power evacuation systems etc.
- Solar Parks are being set up in the country. 47 solar parks of aggregate capacity 26,694 MW has been approved in 21 States up to November, 2018. Over 1,00,000 lakh acres of land identified for various solar parks out of which over 75,000 acres have been acquired.
- Solar projects of aggregate capacity 4195 MW have been commissioned inside various solar parks. The Ministry is also taking up projects for new emerging technologies such as floating solar power.

WIND ENERGY

- The country currently has the fourth highest wind installed capacity in the world with total installed capacity of 34.98 GW as on October, 2018 against a target of 60 GW by 2022. Further, around 9.4 GW capacity is under implementation or have been tendered out.
- The Ministry plans to bid out 10 GW wind power capacity each year for 2018-19 and 2019-20, so that bidding gets completed for entire 60 GW capacity additions by March 2020, leaving two years' time for

execution of projects.

- The recent assessment conducted by National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) indicates a gross wind power potential of 302 GW in the country at 100 meter above ground level.
- The capacity additions till 2017 were through Feed in Tariff (FiT) mechanism. Subsequently, the tariff regime has been shifted from Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) to bidding route.
- The National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy was issued in May 2018. The main objective of the policy is to provide a framework for promotion of large grid connected wind-solar PV hybrid system for optimal and efficient utilization of wind and solar resources, transmission infrastructure and land. The wind - solar PV hybrid systems will help in reducing the variability in renewable power generation and achieving better grid stability.
- A bid for setting up of first 1200 MW Greenfield wind solar hybrid project was floated by SECI.
- The National Offshore wind energy policy was notified in October 2015 with an objective to develop the offshore wind energy in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) along the Indian coastline.

BIO POWER

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has been promoting programmes to promote Biomass Power and Bagasse Cogeneration in the country with an objective to utilize country's available biomass resources like bagasse, rice husk, straw, cotton stalk, coconut shells etc. for power generation.
 - Waste to Energy projects are also being set up for generation of Energy from Urban, Industrial and Agricultural Waste / Residues such as municipal solid wastes, vegetable and other market wastes, slaughterhouse waste, agricultural residues and industrial wastes & effluents.
 - A total capacity of 9.54 GW of grid connected bio-power has been installed in the country as on October 2018 against a target of 10 GW bio-power by 2022. This includes 8.73 GW from bagasse cogeneration, 0.68 GW from non-bagasse cogeneration and 0.13 GW from waste to energy.
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