



Daily Current Affairs

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NGT To Check Plastic Menace

Why in News?

In order to tackle the problem of waste management in respect to the industries involved in manufacture of plastic products, the NGT ordered for the appointment of a committee of Central Pollution Control Board and Delhi Pollution Control Committee.

Problems of Plastic:

- Plastics are the inexpensive and durable substances which are attributable to their useful properties can cater multiple needs in the form of utensils, instruments, carry bags, packaging material, insulations, furniture, floor tiles, home décor items, toys, etc.
- However, the increased reliance on plastics has caused detrimental impact on their improper disposal. Owing to their chemical composition, plastics are resistant to the natural process of degradation and accumulate in the environment thus polluting the same.
- Interfering with the living organisms of all stages of ecosystem, available at the disposal site, they tend to cause damage to their lifecycles.

How to deal with Plastic Menace?

- First, Meticulous planning and widespread awareness have been the tools of the Government to counter the ill-effects of plastic in the environment.

- Second, Plastic waste minimization, source segregation, recycling, involving waste pickers, recyclers and waste processors in collection of plastic waste fraction either from households or any other source of its generation or intermediate material recovery facility.
- To adopt polluter's pay principle for the sustainability of the waste management system, the Central Government enforced the Plastic Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2016.

Plastic Management Rules 2016.

- The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 aim to:
- Increase minimum thickness of plastic carry bags from 40 to 50 microns and stipulate minimum thickness of 50 micron for plastic sheets also to facilitate collection and recycle of plastic waste,
- Expand the jurisdiction of applicability from the municipal area to rural areas, because plastic has reached rural areas also;
- To bring in the responsibilities of producers and generators, both in plastic waste management system and to introduce collect back system of plastic waste by the producers/brand owners, as per extended producers responsibility;
- To introduce collection of plastic waste management fee through pre-registration of the producers, importers of plastic carry bags/multilayered packaging and vendors selling the same for establishing the waste management system;
- To promote use of plastic waste for road construction as per Indian Road Congress guidelines or energy recovery, or waste to oil etc. for gainful utilization of waste and also address the waste disposal issue; to entrust more responsibility on waste generators, namely payment of user charge as prescribed by local authority, collection and handing over of waste by the institutional generator, event organizers.

The judicial view

- An application had been made to the NGT regarding the pollution being caused by the plastic industry making shoe soles and other plastic goods such as rexine, adhesive and other highly inflammable items in Narela and Bawana area.
- It was contended that flouting the pollution and waste management norms, the industrialists were not disposing their industrial wastes

properly creating problem to residents and the environment thus being a health hazard.

- With the objective of strengthening the regime of the environmental protection laws, the NGT has ordered for taking appropriate action by the establishment of a committee for dealing with the problems caused by the environmental pollution due to plastic wastes.
 - The report shall be taken into consideration by the NGT while deliberating and concluding its decision on the industrialists involved in improper plastic waste management.
 - The NGT has also reinforced the fact that its orders have to be binding as a decree of court making the parties liable for their deeds and subject them to punitive action in event of non-compliance.
 - Thus , NGT has taken progressive step to counter plastic terrorism as well improving developmental activities.
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Chhath Puja 2018

Why in News?

Dedicated to lord Shiva, Chhath puja is celebrated with great zeal and rigour in Bihar and parts of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam and even Mauritius.

- Chhath Parva, also called Chhath, Dala Chhath and Surya Shasthi is a festival dedicated to the Sun god (Surya bhagwan). The festival is celebrated mainly in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, as well as states, such as, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam and Bhojpuri and Maithili-speaking countries, like, Mauritius.
- During the four long-days of Chhath puja 2018 devotees will worship lord Surya. During this puja, the setting sun is worshipped.
- Women observe this challenging fast of 36 hours since ages with consistent faith that lord Surya will make all their wishes come true, if the ritual of offering '**araghya**' to setting sun is done with

complete devotion.

Significance of Chhath puja

- The festival is dedicated to lord Surya (Sun god), which people believe sustains life on Earth.
 - Hindus believe that the early sunlight helps to cure many diseases and is a great source of healing too. Chhath puja is performed to seek blessings from lord Surya for a long, healthy and prosperous life.
 - The festival is celebrated in between the months of October and November. Chhath literally means “six” and the festival gets started just after the Govardhan puja, completing on the seventh day (Saptami - the paran/ parna day).
 - During Chhath puja, the setting sun is worshipped. Women observe this challenging fast of 36 hours since ages with consistent faith that lord Surya will make all their wishes come true, if the ritual of offering ‘araghya’ to setting sun is done with complete devotion.
 - Fasting is observed by lady folks or married women for the well-being of their sons and the happiness of family members.
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Impact of GST on Pharma Sector

Why in News?

Figures show significant positive impact on Annual Turnover, Exports of Pharma Sector and Drug Approvals post implementation of GST

Highlights:

- Impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on Pharma sector has largely been positive and constructive, informed Minister of State for Road Transport, Highways, Shipping and Chemicals & Fertilizers, Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, in a statement.
- Before GST, Annual Turnover of the Pharma Sector (as on 31.05.2017)

was Rs 1,14,231 crores while after GST, the Annual Turnover of Pharma sector (as on 31.05.2018) touched Rs 1,31,312 crores, which is 6% higher than the Pre-GST regime.

- Exports from Pharma Sector during 2016-17 were Rs 2,75,852 crores while post-GST, in the year 2017-18, they were recorded at Rs 3,03,526 crores, which is 10% higher than the Pre-GST Regime.
- The Minister added that as per estimates, the export figure for the current year is likely to be Rs 3,27,700 crores, which will be almost 12% higher than the export figure of Pre-GST regime (2016-17).
- Further, it was informed that there has been a significant jump in number of Drug Approvals from 7,857 before GST to 10,446 post-GST.

Why Pharma Sector showing positive growth in GST regime?

- Under the 'One Nation, One Tax' regime, the removal of complexity of multiple taxes has reduced their cascading effect on the final product.
- GST is expected to decrease the manufacturing cost in view of merging of different taxes levied earlier and promote ease of doing business.
- It will create one single market for all stakeholders with equal chance towards development.
- Due to discontinuation of Central Sales Tax post-GST, it will reduce transaction costs, as inter-state transaction between two dealers will become tax neutral.
- Now, the pharma companies can consolidate their warehouses at strategic locations, effecting a reduction in cost of distribution.
- As a result, it will benefit warehouse strategy and improve supply chain efficiency in pharma sector.

Cyclone Gaja

Why in News?

The severe cyclonic storm 'Gaja' crossed the Tamil Nadu coast between Nagapattinam and Vedaranniyam early Friday morning with wind speeds gusting up to 120 kmph.

About Cyclone Gaja

- Cyclone Gaja, classified a Severe Cyclonic Storm by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), rises and concentrates in Bay of Bengal.
 - Cyclone is expected to make landfall on Thursday evening between Cuddalore and Pamban in Ramanathapuram district. Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and south Andhra coasts are likely to see gale winds with windspeed touching 100kmph from Thursday afternoon, according to IMD.
 - The coast of Tamil Nadu is also expected to see high waves, with an advisory issued to fishermen to not venture out into the sea.
 - The narrow strip of the extreme South Peninsula allowed for continuous supply of moisture from both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea helping it to maintain intensity.
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Hunar Haat

Why in News?

Minister for Minority Affairs Inaugurated “Hunar Haat” at India International Trade Fair, New Delhi.

About Hunar Haat:

- The Union Ministry of Minority Affairs is organising Hunar Haat under Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development (USTTAD) scheme at different parts of country.
- It has become successful mission to provide employment and employment opportunities and national as well international markets for thousands of master artisans, craftsmen and culinary experts.
- It has provided platform to master artisans and craftsmen to display their rich heritage and skills. It is also providing domestic and international markets to these artisans and craftsmen.
- The artisans have brought with them very exquisite pieces of Handicraft & Handloom work products like Ajarakh, Bagh print, Bandhej, Barmer Ajrakh & Applique, Bidriware, Cane and Bamboo, Carpet, Chanderi, Chaniya Choli, Chikankari, Copper Bell Product, Copperware, Ceramic Products, Dry Flowers, Gota Pati, Handloom & Home Furnishings from

every corner of the country.

- Employment oriented programmes of the Central Government like “Hunar Haat” has significantly encouraged and promoted the rich traditional heritage of master artisans which had been marginalised for a long time.
- Hunar Haat has become a “credible brand” to fulfil Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s commitment to “Make in India”, “Stand up India”, “Start up India”.
- During the last one year, “Hunar Haat”, organised at various parts of the country, has been successful in providing employment and employment opportunities to more than 1 lakh 50 thousand artisans and other people associated with them.
- The target is to provide employment and employment opportunities to about 5 lakh people of the country through “Hunar Haat”.

USTTAD scheme

USTTAD scheme of Ministry of Minority Affairs aims at preserving and promoting the rich heritage of traditional arts & crafts of the Minority communities. In light of globalisation & competitive market, these crafts have gradually lost their employability. It also envisages at boosting skill of craftsmen, weavers and artisans who are already engaged in traditional ancestral work.

NITI Aayog Constitutes Himalayan State Regional Council

Why in News?

NITI Aayog has constituted the ‘Himalayan State Regional Council’ to ensure sustainable development of the Indian Himalayan region. The Council has been constituted to review and implement identified action points based on the Reports of five Working Groups, which were established along thematic areas to prepare a roadmap for action.

Highlights:

'Himalayan State Regional Council' has been constituted to review and implement identified action points based on the Reports of five Working Groups, which were established along thematic areas to prepare a roadmap for action.

Recognizing the uniqueness of the Himalayas and the challenges for sustainable development, Five Working Groups were constituted by NITI Aayog.

These Working Groups were tasked with preparing a roadmap for action across five thematic areas namely,

1. Inventory and Revival of Springs in Himalayas for Water Security,
2. Sustainable Tourism in Indian Himalayan Region,
3. Shifting Cultivation: Towards Transformation Approach,
4. Strengthening Skill & Entrepreneurship (E&S) Landscape in Himalayas, and
5. Data/Information for Informed Decision Making.

The Himalayan States Regional Council will be the nodal agency for the Sustainable development in the Himalayan Region which consists of the twelve States namely Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, two districts of Assam namely Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong and Darjeeling and Kalimpong in West Bengal.

The terms of reference of the Council states that it shall monitor the implementation of action points for Central Ministries, Institutions and 12 Himalayan State Governments in Indian Himalayan Region which include river basin development and regional cooperation, spring mapping and revival across Himalayas in phased manner for water security; develop, implement and monitor tourism sector standards as well as bring policy coherence, strengthen skill & entrepreneurship with focus on identified priority sectors, among other action points.
