Prelim Bits 16-09-2021 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Relief Package for Telecom Sector

The Union Cabinet has approved 9 structural reforms for telecom sector to provide relief to the cash-strapped companies.

- A **4-year moratorium** has been approved on
    1. Dues of Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) arising out of the Supreme Court judgment on annual gross revenue (AGR), and
    2. Due payments of spectrum purchased in past auctions.
- Currently, TSPs pay around 3-5% of AGR as SUC, while they pay around 8% of the AGR as licence fee.
- AGR are the revenues, considered for payment of statutory dues.
- **Definition of AGR** has been changed to exclude non-telecom revenue.
- Monthly compounding of interest on spectrum usage charges will be replaced by annual compounding and the interest rate will come down, based on the formula MCLR + 2%.
- **100% foreign direct investment (FDI)** in the telecom sector through the automatic route is also announced.
    - So far, up to 49% was allowed through the automatic route and anything thereafter had to go through the government route.
- The package is also expected to boost 4G proliferation, infuse liquidity and create an enabling environment for investment in 5G networks.

FDI Routes

- **Automatic Route** - Foreign entity does not require prior approval of the government or the RBI.
- **Government Route** - Foreign entity is mandated to get the prior government approval.
- It must apply for approval through Foreign Investment Facilitation Portal. This application is forwarded to respective ministry or dept.
- The respective ministry or department approves or rejects the application in consultation with the DPIIT.

Tarballs

Tarballs have resurfaced on Mumbai's beaches like Cuffe Parade shoreline and Juhu beach and Versova beaches.

- Tarballs are dark-coloured, sticky black oil-emanating balls lying on the shore.
- **Formation** - Tarballs form when crude oil floats on the ocean surface. They are formed by weathering of crude oil in marine environments.
- They are transported from the open sea to the shores by sea currents and waves.

- Tarballs are usually coin-sized and are found strewn on the beaches. But, over the years, they have become as big as basketballs.
- They stick to the cleaning machinery and are very difficult to wash off. They give off a foul fuel smell.
- **Deposition** - All the oil spilt in the Arabian Sea gets deposited on the western coast in the form of tarballs in the monsoon season when wind speed and circulation pattern favour transportation of these tarballs.
- Tarballs are removed from the beaches post-high tide.

Shoonya Campaign

With Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and RMI India's support, NITI Aayog has launched Shoonya Campaign.

- The Shoonya campaign aims to
    1. Accelerate adoption of **electric vehicles** (EVs) in the urban deliveries segment and
    2. Create consumer awareness about the health, environmental and economic benefits of **zero-pollution delivery**.

  Urban freight vehicles account for 10% of freight transportation-related CO2 emissions in India, and these emissions may grow by 114% percent by 2030.

- As part of the campaign, a corporate branding & certification programme is being launched to promote industry's efforts towards transitioning to EVs for final-mile deliveries.
- An **online tracking platform** will share the campaign's impact through data such as vehicle kilometers electrified, carbon savings, criteria pollutant savings and other benefits from clean delivery vehicles.

  EVs emit no tailpipe emissions, which can contribute immensely to an improved air quality.

  Even when accounting for their manufacture, they emit 15-40% less CO2 compared to their internal combustion engine counterparts and have lower operational cost.

Hybodont Shark

Teeth of new species of hybodont shark of Jurassic age called Strophodus jaisalmerensis have been reported for the first time from Jaisalmer region of Rajasthan by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

- Hybodonts sharks were a dominant group of fishes in both marine and fluvial environments during the Triassic and early Jurassic time.
- But, these sharks started to decline in marine environments from the Middle Jurassic onwards until they formed a relatively minor component of open-marine shark assemblages.
- Hybodonts finally became extinct at the end of the Cretaceous time 65 million years ago.
- The newly discovered crushing teeth from Jaisalmer represent a new species named by the research team as Strophodus jaisalmerensis.
- The genus Strophodus has been identified for the first time from the Indian subcontinent.

Customs Notified Airport

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has declared Kushinagar Airport as a Customs notified airport.

- This declaration would facilitate international passenger movements including that of Buddhist pilgrims.
- A customs airport is an airport notified by the appropriate customs authority of the country as an airport shall be airports for
    1. The unloading of imported goods and
    2. The loading of export goods or any class of such goods.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express, WION, Live Mint

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
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