Prelim Bits 18-03-2022 | Daily UPSC Current Affairs

Mina Swaminathan

The passing of Mina Swaminathan comes as a loss to generations of researchers, practitioners and activists who drew inspiration from her work.

- Born in 1933, Mina was the daughter of civil servant and economist S Bhoothalingam and Tamil writer "Krithika" Mathuram Bhoothalingam.
- In Cambridge, Mina met her husband, agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan.
- [After the devastation caused by the Bengal famine, Swaminathan chose to study agriculture. He became the leader of the Green Revolution in India, and first awardee of the World Food Prize.]
- Mina was a pioneering educator, researcher and activist for women's equality. She was an educationist in the field of pre-school education.

> "Social justice demands attention to the preschool child because the first 5 years are crucial for all forms of development."

- She was a friend of India's children, especially those without privilege. In 1979, she wrote about the children of the urban poor, as there was an exclusive focus on rural India.
- Mina was deeply involved in trailblazing initiatives such as the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CSDS) and Mobile Creches.
- **Report on ICDS** - As chair of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) Committee on 'The Preschool Child' in 1970, she steered the development of the Report on the Preschool Child (1972).
- This report became the basis of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in India, the largest programme of its kind in the world.
- Fifty years ago, she proposed setting up anganwadis across the country.

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/mina-swaminathan-institution-builder-friend-to-india-children-7825164/
2. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/mina-swaminathan-leaves-behind-a-legacy/articleshow/90211321.cms

Risks to Indian Economy

The officials of the Reserve Bank of India have said that India's macroeconomic fundamentals remain strong but the unfolding global developments pose downside risks in terms of spillover.

- **Ongoing geopolitical crisis** has heightened the uncertainty clouding the global macroeconomic and financial landscape even as the world economy struggles to recover from

the pandemic.
- This uncertain economic outlook had increased risks to the emerging economies.
- Although India was making steady progress on the domestic front, the **spiralling oil and gas prices** and **unsettled financial market conditions** posed fresh headwinds to the incomplete global recovery.
- Rapid and large **withdrawal of fiscal support** has risked pushing the economy over the cliff into a sharp downturn.
- **Related Links -** Impact of Spike in Oil Prices

The RBI has continued with an accommodative stance even as inflation has inched up and left the key lending rate unchanged, keeping it at record lows in the last policy announcement made in February 2022.

Reference

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/global-developments-pose-risks-to-economy-rbi-officials/article65235981.ece

Steel Scrap Recycling Policy

- Ministry of Steel notified the Steel Scrap Recycling Policy in 2019.
- The Policy provides a framework to facilitate and promote establishment of metal scrapping centers in India for scientific processing & recycling of ferrous scrap generated from various sources.
- It provides standard guidelines for collection, dismantling and shredding activities in an organized, safe and environmentally sound manner in order to curb pollution and prevent health hazards.
- Under this Policy, the **Government** will act as the **facilitator to create conducive eco-system for the entrepreneurs and investors** to establish scrapping centres in the country.
- The scrapping centres are approved by the State Governments/Union Territories.
- **Features** - To promote circular economy in the steel sector.
- To promote a formal and scientific collection, dismantling and processing activities for end of life products that are sources of recyclable (ferrous, non- ferrous and other non-metallic) scraps
- Setting up of an environmentally sound management system for handling ferrous scrap.
- Processing and recycling of products in an organized, safe and environment friendly manner.
- To produce high quality ferrous scrap for quality steel production thus minimizing the dependency on imports.
- To decongest the Indian cities from ELVs and reuse of ferrous scrap.
- To create a mechanism for treating waste streams and residues produced from dismantling and shredding facilities in compliance to Hazardous & Other Wastes (Management & Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016.
- To promote 6Rs principles of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover, Redesign and Remanufacture through scientific handling, processing and disposal of all types of recyclable scraps including non-ferrous scraps, through authorized centers / facility.

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1806556
2. https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=194359

National Rail Plan Vision - 2030

Indian Railways have prepared a National Rail Plan (NRP) for India - 2030.

- The National Rail Plan (NRP) is to create a 'future ready' Railway system by 2030.
- NRP is aimed to formulate strategies based on both operational capacities and commercial policy initiatives to increase modal share of the Railways in freight to 45%.
- The objective is to create capacity ahead of demand, which in turn would cater to future demand right up to 2050 and increase the modal share of Railways to 45% in freight traffic and to continue to sustain it.
- **Key objectives of the NRP** - Reduce transit time of freight substantially by increasing average speed of freight trains to 50Kmph.
- As part of the National Rail Plan, **Vision 2024** has been launched for accelerated implementation of certain critical projects by 2024 such as
    1. 100% electrification,
    2. Multi-tracking of congested routes,
    3. Upgradation of speed to 160 kmph on Delhi-Howrah and Delhi-Mumbai routes,
    4. Upgradation of speed to 130kmph on all other Golden Quadrilateral-Golden Diagonal (GQ/GD) routes and
    5. Elimination of all Level Crossings on all GQ/GD route.
- 58 Super critical Projects of total length of 3750 kms and 68 Critical Projects of total length of 6913 kms have been identified for completion by 2024.
- Identify new Dedicated Freight Corridors and, new High Speed Rail Corridors.
- Assess rolling stock requirement for passenger traffic as well as wagon requirement for freight.
- Assess Locomotive requirement to meet twin objectives of 100% electrification (Green Energy) and increasing freight modal share.
- Assess the total investment in capital that would be required along with a periodical break up.
- Sustained involvement of the Private Sector in areas like operations and ownership of rolling stock, development of freight and passenger terminals, development/operations of track infrastructure etc.

Reference

https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1806617

India's Arctic Policy

Ministry of Earth Sciences released India's Arctic policy titled 'India and the Arctic: building a partnership for sustainable development'.

- India's Arctic policy would play an essential role in preparing the country for a future where humankind's biggest challenges, like climate change, can be addressed through collective will and effort.
- India's Arctic policy lays down **six pillars**:
    1. Strengthening India's scientific research and cooperation,
    2. Climate and environmental protection,
    3. Economic and human development,
    4. Transportation and connectivity,
    5. Governance and international cooperation, and
    6. National capacity building in the Arctic region.

- Implementing India's Arctic policy will involve multiple stakeholders, including academia, the research community, business, and industry.

India's Arctic policy aims to promote the following,

- Strengthening national capabilities and competencies in science and exploration, climate and environmental protection, maritime and economic cooperation with the Arctic region.
- Institutional and human resource capacities will be strengthened within Government and academic, research and business institutions.
- Inter-ministerial coordination in pursuit of India's interests in the Arctic.
- Enhancing understanding of the impact of climate change in the Arctic on India's climate, economic, and energy security.
- Contributing better analysis, prediction, and coordinated policymaking on the implications of ice melting in the Arctic on India's economic, military and strategic interests related to global shipping routes, energy security, and exploitation of mineral wealth.
- Studying linkages between Polar Regions and the Himalayas.
- Deepen cooperation between India and countries of the Arctic region under various Arctic forums, drawing expertise from scientific and traditional knowledge.
- Increase India’s participation in the Arctic Council and improve understanding of the complex governance structures in the Arctic, relevant international laws, and geopolitics of the region.

Reference

https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1806993

