Prelim Bits 25-07-2021 and 26-07-2021 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Microplastic Pollution in Ganga

- A study has found that the river Ganga is heavily polluted with microplastics as well as other kinds of plastics such as single-use plastic and secondary plastic products.
    - Ganga has India's largest river basin in terms of catchment area and constitutes about 26% of India's landmass spread across 11 states, which supports 43% of the population.
- For the study, samples of Ganga's water were collected from Haridwar, Kanpur and Varanasi and microplastics were found in all of them.
    - Of the samples, those taken at Varanasi had the highest concentration of plastic pollution.
- Untreated sewage from densely populated cities across the river's course, along with industrial waste and religious offerings wrapped in non-degradable plastic add a significant amount of pollutants into the river.
- As the river flows, these waste and plastic materials break down further and are carried into the Bay of Bengal and then into the ocean.
- Microplastics flowing all along Ganga suggest a direct linkage between the poor state of both solid and liquid waste management; hence it is critically important to initiate steps to remediate it.

- **Efforts -** Most of the efforts to clean Ganga have focussed on creating sewage treatment capacities in the major urban centres along the river.
- In 2015, the government approved the Namami Gange (100% funding from the central government) programme to clean and protect the river.
- Programmes launched before this include the Ganga Action Plan (1985), the IIT Consortium (2011) for water diversion and effective treatment, and the National Mission for Clean Ganga (2011).

Microplastics

- Among the range of plastic debris that is found in water bodies, microplastics are the most notorious because of their small size.
- On average, microplastics are less than 5 mm in length or roughly equal to 5 pinheads.
- 11% of the 663 marine species that are affected by marine debris are said to

be related to microplastic ingestion.
- Microplastics are ingested by marine habitants including fish, corals, planktons etc and are then carried further into the food chain.
- In the case of humans, most of the microplastics can be found in food, water and food containers and their ingestion can cause health problems.

Kakatiya Ramappa Temple - A UNESCO World Heritage Site

- The World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO has declared Kakatiya Kakatiya Ramappa Temple (Rudeshwara Temple), Telangana as a World Heritage site (WHS). It is India's 39th WHS.
- **About** - Ramappa Temple was constructed in 1213 AD during the reign of the Kakatiya Empire by Recharla Rudra, a general of Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva. The presiding deity here is Ramalingeswara Swamy.
- The temple is located at the foothills of a forested area, close to the shores of the Ramappa Cheruvu, a Kakatiya-built water reservoir.
- It stands on a 6-ft high star-shaped platform with walls, pillars and ceilings adorned with intricate carvings that attest to the unique skill of the Kakatiyan sculptors.
- **Engineering Marvel** - The temple is a 13th century engineering marvel named after its architect Ramappa, who executed the work in the temple for 40 years.
- The distinct style of Kakatiyas for the gateways to temple complexes, unique only to this region confirms the highly evolved proportions of aesthetics in temple and town gateways in South India.
- A European traveler had remarked that the temple was the "brightest star in the galaxy of medieval temples of the Deccan".

PM CARES for Children Scheme

- Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched the web based portal 'PM CARES for Children' scheme.
- The portal's aim is to facilitate submission of applications, identification of children eligible to receive support, etc.
- **PM CARES for Children** Scheme, announced by the Prime Minister, aims to ensure comprehensive care and protection of children who have lost their parents to COVID pandemic, in a sustained manner.
- **Eligibility** - All children who have lost
    1. Both parents or
    2. Surviving parent or
    3. Legal guardian/adoptive parents due to COVID 19 pandemic, starting from 11th March, 2020 till the end of pandemic, shall be entitled to benefits under this scheme.

- **Financial Support** - It will provide support to these children through convergent approach and gap funding to ensure health, education, monthly stipend from the age of 18 years.
- They will also be given a lump sum amount of Rs. 10 lakhs, at the age of 23.
- On reaching the age of 23 years, s/he will get the corpus amount as one lump-sum for personal and professional use.
- **School Education** - Child under 10 years will be given admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar.
- Child between 11-18 years will be admitted in any Central Government residential school such as Sainik School, Navodaya Vidyalaya etc.
- In case the child is to be continued under the care of Guardian/ grandparents/ extended family, then s/he will be given admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar.
- If the child is admitted in a private school, the fees as per the RTE norms will be given from the PM CARES. The expenditure on uniform, text books and notebooks will also be paid under PM CARES.
- **Support for Higher Education** - The child will be assisted in obtaining education loan for Professional courses / Higher Education in India as per the existing Education Loan norms.
- The interest on this loan will be paid by the PM CARES.
- As an alternative, scholarship equivalent to the tuition fees / course fees for undergraduate/ vocational courses as per Government norms will be provided to such children under Central or State Government Schemes.
- For children who are not eligible under the existing scholarship schemes, PM CARES will provide an equivalent scholarship.
- **Health Insurance** - All children will be a beneficiary under Ayushman Bharat Scheme (PM-JAY) with a health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakhs.
- The premium amount for these children till the age of 18 years will be paid by PM CARES.

Periodic Labour Force Survey

- The third Annual Report on the basis of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted during July 2019-June 2020 was released.
- PLFS is India's first computer-based survey launched by the National Statistical Office (NSO) in 2017. It has been constituted based on the recommendation of Amitabh Kundu.
- The first Annual Report (July 2017- June 2018) was released in 2019.
- The objective of PLFS is primarily,
    1. To estimate the key employment and unemployment indicators for the urban areas only in the 'Current Weekly Status' (CWS) quarterly - **Quarterly survey**
    2. To estimate the employment and unemployment indicators in both 'Usual Status' (ps+ss) and CWS in both rural and urban areas annually -

Annual survey

- **Key Indicators** - Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is the percentage of persons in labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) in the population.
- Worker Population Ratio (WPR) is the percentage of employed persons in the population.
- Unemployment Rate (UR) is the percentage of persons unemployed among the persons in the labour force.
- **Activity Status** - The activity status of a person is determined on the basis of the activities pursued by the person during the specified reference period.
- When the activity status is determined on the basis of the reference period of last 365 days preceding the date of survey, it is known as the usual activity status of the person.
- When the activity status is determined on the basis of a reference period of last 7 days preceding the date of survey, it is known as the Current Weekly Status (CWS) of the person.
- The activity status on which a person spent relatively long time during 365 days preceding the date of survey, was considered the usual principal activity status of the person.
- Subsidiary economic activity status is the activity status in which a person in addition to his/her usual principal status, performs some economic activity for 30 days or more for the reference period of 365 days preceding the date of survey.

National Statistical Office

- It is the central statistical agency of the Government mandated under the Statistical Services Act, 1980 under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- It is responsible for the development of arrangements for providing statistical information services to meet the needs of the Government and other users for information on which to base policy, planning, monitoring and management decisions.
- Services - Collecting, Compiling and Disseminating official statistical information.

Supreme Court on 97th Amendment Act

- The Supreme Court struck down the Part IX B of the Constitution inserted by the 97th constitutional amendment act, 2011 that deals with issues related to effective management of cooperative societies.
- But, it upheld the validity of the amendment and left the following clauses undisturbed.

1. Amendment to the Article 19(1)(c) of the Constitution.
2. Amendment to the 'Directive Principle' through Article 43B.

- **Gujarat HC decision** - The SC's verdict came on the Centre's plea challenging the Gujarat High Court's 2013 decision.
- The Gujarat HC struck down certain provisions of the 97th constitutional amendment while holding that Parliament cannot enact laws with regard to cooperative societies as it is a State subject.
- The HC struck down Part IXB in its entirety on two grounds,
  - The Amendment required a two-thirds majority in Parliament, and also had to be ratified by 50% of the State legislatures as it impinged on a State subject. In the absence of such ratification, the HC declared that the Part was unconstitutional.
  - The Part IX B violated the basic structure of the Constitution in that it was in breach of federal principles.
- The Supreme Court also said that the Amendment had the effect of limiting and circumscribing the scope and extent to which States could frame laws on cooperative societies.

97th Constitutional Amendment, 2011

- It dealt with issues related to effective management of co-operative societies in the country. It had come into effect from February 15, 2012.
- The changes made in the Constitution are,
  1. Amendment to the Article 19(1)(c) by adding the words "or cooperative societies" to expand the fundamental right to form associations or unions to cover cooperative societies too and
  2. Inserted Article 43 B and Part IX B, relating to the cooperatives.
- Recognising that 'cooperative societies' came under Entry 32 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule, the Amendment proposed to create a framework for the functioning of cooperative societies.
- State laws on cooperatives should conform to this framework.
- The 97th Constitutional Amendment empowers,
  1. Parliament to frame laws for cooperative societies that function across States (multi-State cooperative societies) and
  2. State legislatures to make laws for all other cooperative societies falling under their jurisdiction.
- The Amendment set out basic rules such as
  1. A maximum of 21 directors in a society,
  2. A fixed term of five years for elected members,
  3. A six-month cap on the time limit for which a society's board of directors can be kept under supersession or suspension, and
  4. Reservation of one seat for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled

Tribes, and two seats for women on the board of every cooperative society, that is, every society that has members from these sections.

I-STEM

- The Indian Science Technology and Engineering facilities Map (I-STEM), project has been accorded extension for 5 years, until 2026 and enters Phase-II with added features.
- Launched in 2020, I-STEM is the national web portal for sharing R&D facilities.
- I-STEM is an initiative of Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Govt. of India (PSA, GOI) under the aegis of Prime Minister Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) mission.
- The portal was created by the Centre for Nano Science and Engineering (CeNSE) at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.
- The goal of I-STEM is to strengthen the R&D ecosystem of the country by connecting researchers with resources, in part by
    - Promoting technologies and scientific equipment development indigenously, and
    - Providing necessary supplies and supports to researchers by enabling them an access to existing publicly funded R&D facilities in the country through the I-STEM web portal.
- I-STEM portal facilitates researchers to access slots for the use of equipment, as well as to share the details of the outcomes.
- **Phase II** - I-STEM portal will be designed as a dynamic digital platform that will provide boost to research and innovation especially for 2 tier and 3 tier cities and also for the emerging start-up ecosystem.
- It will host indigenous technology products listed through a digital catalogue.
- It will be a platform for various City Knowledge and Innovation Clusters supported by PSA Office to enhance effective use of R&D infrastructure through leveraging collaboration and partnership built on a shared STI ecosystem.
- It will also host and provide access to selected R&D software required to undertake research projects by students and scientists.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express, Business Line

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering