Prelim Bits 25-09-2019

Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal (SYL)

- The Supreme Court recently asked Punjab, Haryana and Centre to sort out **SYL** issue amicably.
- It has brought to centre stage the contentious issue of sharing of waters between the two states.
- The issue dates back to 1966 at the time of reorganisation of Punjab.
- When Haryana was formed, a need arose to share river waters with the newly formed state.
- But Punjab was opposed to sharing waters of Ravi and Beas rivers with Haryana citing riparian principle.
- A decade before the formation of Haryana, the water flowing in Ravi and Beas was assessed at 15.85 million acre feet (**MAF**).
- Union government had organised a meeting in 1955 between the three stake-holders Rajasthan, undivided Punjab and J&K.
- Rajasthan was allotted 8 MAF, undivided Punjab's share was 7.20 MAF and J&K got 0.65 MAF.
- A decade after reorganisation, the Centre issued a notification allocating 3.5 MAF to Haryana out of 7.2 MAF, Punjab's share.
- In 1982, the then PM launched the construction of Satluj-Yamuna Link canal (**SYL**).
- A stretch of 214 km **SYL** was to be constructed out of which 122 km was to cross Punjab and the rest 92 km in Haryana.
- But Akalis launched an agitation in the form of Kapoori Morcha against the construction of the canal.
- Then in 1985, then PM and the then Akali Dal chief signed an accord agreeing for a new tribunal to assess the water.
- **Eradi Tribunal** headed by Supreme Court Judge Balakrishna Eradi was set up to reassess availability and sharing of water.
- The Tribunal, in 1987, recommended an increase in the shares of Punjab and Haryana to 5 MAF and 3.83 MAF, respectively.
- In 1985, Akali Dal chief was killed by militants, in less than a month for signing the accord.
- In 1990, a chief engineer and a Superintending Engineer were killed by militants and the construction came to a halt.

- As per government's study, state's many areas may go dry after 2029.
- The state has already over-exploited its groundwater for irrigation purposes.
- When farmers are committing suicides and the raising need for saving water, Punjab says, sharing water with any other state is impossible.
- Haryana has been staking claim on Ravi-Beas through **SYL** canal on the plea that providing water for irrigation for the state.
- Haryana has been lamenting that justice had been denied to the state by not providing its rightful share as assessed by a tribunal.

Participatory Guarantee Scheme (PGS)

- **FSSAI** expects, the Agriculture Ministry's **PGS** to incentivise more farmers to grow organic food.
- Participatory Guarantee Scheme **(PGS)** is a process of certifying organic products.
- It ensures that their production takes place in accordance with the laid-down quality standards.
- The certification is in the form of a documented logo or a statement.
- The certified organic food production is still very low. The PGS brings together peer group of farmers and the costs are low.
- According to **PGS-India**,
    1. An 'Operational Manual for Domestic Organic Certification' published in 2015.
    2. It was published by the 'National Centre of Organic Farming', Ghaziabad, under the Ministry of Agriculture.
    3. **PGS** is a quality assurance initiative, operates outside the framework of third-party certification.
- According to a definition formulated by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (**IFOAM**),
    1. PGSs are "locally focused quality assurance systems".
    2. It certify the producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.
    3. **IFOAM** is a Bonn-based global umbrella organisation for the organic agriculture movement.
- **Four pillars of PGS in India are,**

1. Participatory approach, a shared vision, transparency and trust.

- The advantages of **PGS** over third-party certification, identified by the government document are,

1. Procedures are simple, documents are basic, and farmers understand the local language used.
2. All members live close to each other and are known to each other.
3. Because peer appraisers live in the same village, they have better access to surveillance.
4. Peer appraisal instead of third-party inspections also reduces costs.
5. Mutual recognition and support between regional PGS groups ensures better networking for processing and marketing.
6. It offers every farmer individual certificates, and the farmer is free to market his own produce independent of the group.

- Individual farmers or group of farmers smaller than 5 members are not covered under **PGS**.
- They either have to opt for third party certification or join the existing **PGS** local group.

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

- Over the past few years, the National Green Tribunal (**NGT**) has reached a crossroads.
- Instead of giving financial and administrative support to NGT, efforts are usually directed towards diluting its powers.
- Taking into account the increasing number of environmental cases and the involvement of multi-disciplinary issues
- Government enacted the **NGT** Act in 2010 for the effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection, conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- To address complex environmental cases,

1. Section 4 of the NGT Act prescribes that the tribunal shall consist of a full-time chairperson,
2. At least 10 but not exceeding 20 judicial and expert members at all times.

- Section 14, 15 and 16 of the Act state that,

1. The tribunal shall have the jurisdiction over all civil cases where a substantial question relating to environment is involved.
2. Provide relief and compensation to the victims of pollution and other environmental damage arising under the environmental acts, and
3. Hear appeal from any person aggrieved by any order or decision related to environmental matters.

- In the last 9 years, the NGT has never got the minimum strength to address

the increasing number of environmental litigations.

- With no indication of appointment of more judicial and expert members from the MoEF&CC, the 4 zonal benches have been completely shut over the past 1 year.
- Hearing of the zonal bench litigation is nowadays taking place via video-conference and that too only for 1 to 2 hours.
- No expert members to address complex environmental problems ranging from nuclear waste to bio-medical wastes to hazardous wastes.
- In the absence of variety of expert members, decisions, related to the compensation amount to be paid by the polluter are arrived at without any scientific basis.
- This has resulted in an increasing number of appeals against the NGT's decisions in the Supreme Court.
- There is no institutional mechanism to enforce the orders of the tribunal.
- Most of the landmark orders of the NGT related to Ganga water pollution, Delhi pollution, and solid waste management remain unenforced.
- Countries like New Zealand and Australia, have specialised environmental courts and they regularly restructure administrative and financial support to increase its efficiency.
- The government needs to provide adequate financial and human resources as NGT deserves more attention today.

Source: PIB, The Indian Express

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