UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 08-05-2021

Exemption to conduct BVLOS Drone Flights

- Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has granted conditional exemption to Telangana Government for conducting experimental Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) drone flights for vaccine delivery.
- Earlier, Telangana Government was granted conditional exemption for conducting experimental delivery of Covid-19 vaccines within Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) Range using drones.
- This BVLOS exemption shall be subject to complete adherence to the conditions as stated below and the directions/ exemptions issued (or to be issued in future) by the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA).
- To know more about the BVLOS exemption, click here.

Conditions for conducting BVLOS Drone Flights

- Each Consortium engaged in BVLOS operations should submit to DGCA, the SOP for BVLOS operations, SOP for coordinating with Air Traffic Control (ATC) and Indian Air Force (IAF).
- Security clearance of the entities, personnel involved and the proposed airspaces shall be obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- Each Consortium should conduct a hazard identification and risk management (HIRM) workshop involving all stakeholders.
- Maximum permitted height for drone operations is 400 ft Above Ground Level. Energy reserve of 15% of flight time should be provisioned for.
- Drone pilots shall hold a valid certificate of training and have sufficient experience in drone operations.
- A Flight Plan should be filed for each trial BVLOS flight with ATC; and Flight Information Centre (FIC) number and Air Defence Clearance (ADC) number shall be obtained.
- Drone operation is limited between local sunrise and local sunset. Visual Meteorological Conditions should prevail at take-off and landing sites.
- Each Consortium should establish basic UAS Traffic Management (UTM) infrastructure for real-time management of the flights.
- It shall ensure that the UAS operations are insured against any accidents leading to injury/ death of uninvolved persons or damage to property.

Drones Requirements

- The drones used for BVLOS trial flights should be Micro or Small category rotary wing drone type with a valid Drone Acknowledgement Number (DAN).
- They should have endurance for long-range operations, capability to withstand adverse weather, transmit identity and live trajectory information,
- They should have capability to carry out geo-fencing, Return to Home (RTH) and Automatic Flight Termination.
- They should carry a barometric sensor on-board, a 360-degrees Collision avoidance system and Detect And Avoid (DAA) System.
- Display of pilot to provide live trajectory, manned aircraft information, DAA information and First Person View (FPV), with visual/ audio alerts.
- Payload should be restricted to the proposed use-case. They should not be used commercial purposes. During the trials, drone shall not drop or discharge substances and shall not transport any hazardous material.

Model Insurance Villages

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has come out with the concept of Model Insurance Villages (MIV).
- The idea behind the MIV concept is to offer comprehensive insurance protection to all the major insurable risks that villagers are exposed to and make available covers at affordable or subsidised cost.
- Such MIVs are expected to tackle losses due to natural calamities like floods and earthquakes. There's no catastrophe insurance in India now.
- The concept would be implemented in a minimum of 500 villages in different districts of the country in the first year and increased to 1,000 villages in the subsequent 2 years. It will be implemented for 3 to 5 years.
- Every general insurance company and reinsurance company accepting general insurance business and having office in India needs to be involved for piloting the concept.
- In order to make the premium affordable, financial support needs to be explored through NABARD, other institutions, CSR funds, support from government and re-insurance companies.
- This is to ensure that families and their property, crops get cover and the entire village community participate in the initiative.

National Programme for Organic Production

- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has sourced finger millet and barnyard millet from farmers in Himalayas (Uttarakhand) for exports to Denmark.
- These millets were exported to Denmark after meeting the organic certification standards of the European Union (EU).
- At present, organic products are exported provided they are produced,

processed, packed and labelled as per the requirements of the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP).
- The NPOP or the Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India) is a top- down mechanism run by the APEDA under the Ministry of Commerce for certifying general exports.
- The NPOP came into inception in 2001 under the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulations) Act, 1992.
- **Significance** - The NPOP certification recognized by the EU and Switzerland enables India to export unprocessed plant products to these countries without the requirement of additional certification.
- It also facilitates export of Indian organic products to the United Kingdom even in the post Brexit phase.
- It has also been recognized by the Food Safety Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) for trade of organic products in the domestic market.
- Organic products covered under the bilateral agreement with NPOP need not to be recertified for import in India.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

- This authority, which was established under the APEDA Act, 1985, functions under the control of Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It has been mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and development of the scheduled products viz. fruits, vegetables and their products, meat products and poultry products, dairy products, etc.,
- It has been entrusted with the responsibility to monitor import of sugar.

Withdrawal of Rate Cuts on Small Savings Schemes

- Hours after notifying significant cuts in small savings instruments' returns for this quarter, the government has backtracked on these cuts.

- The Small Saving Schemes (SSSs) are major source of household savings in India.
- They have mobilized money from households and channelized them to government so that the centre and states can finance a part of their expenditure.
- The Central Government operates SSSs through the nationwide network of Post Offices, branches of the Public-Sector Banks and select private sector banks and more than 5 lakh small savings agents.
- **Types** - The Small Savings instrument basket comprises 12 instruments. They can be grouped under three,
    1. **Post office Deposits** - Post Office Savings Account, Post Office Time

Deposits (1,2,3 and 5 years), Post Office Recurring Deposits, Post Office Monthly Account,
2. **Savings Certificates** - National Savings Certificate (VIII Issue) and Kisan Vikas Patra,
3. **Social Security Schemes** - Public Provident Fund, Senior Citizens Savings Scheme, and Sukanya Samriddhi Account.

National Small Savings Fund

- National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) was established in 1999 within the **Public Account of India** for crediting the money collected from all small savings schemes (SSSs) to the NSSF.
- Also, withdrawals under SSSs by the depositors are made out of NSSF.
- Objective for the formation of a dedicated fund for small savings is to de-link small savings transactions from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Since NSSF operates in the Public Account, its transactions do not impact the fiscal deficit of the Centre directly.
- As an instrument in the public account, the balances under NSSF are direct liabilities and constitute a part of the liabilities of the Centre.
- **Administration of NSSF -** The NSSF is administered by the Ministry of Finance under National Small Savings Fund Rules, 2001, which is derived from Article 283(1) of the Constitution.
- **Use of proceeds from NSSF -** Pattern of utilization of the NSSF among the centre and states is decided from time to time by the Government of India.
- As per the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, the government has excluded states (except four states) from the use of Small Saving Scheme money.
- This is because the SSSs have slightly higher interest rate than the loans procured by states. Now, the NSSF will be used by the centre.

State Disaster Response Fund

- The Centre has released the first instalment of the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for 2021-22 to all the States, in the wake of the second wave of COVID-19.
- Normally, the annual exercise of release of the first instalment is usually done in June, as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission.
- As a special dispensation, the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, at the recommendation of the Home Ministry, has released in advance the first instalment of the Central share of the SDRF.
- Since Delhi is a Union Territory, the fund is released by the MHA and is included in the Union Budget.
- **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)** has been constituted under

Section 48 (1) (a) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, based on the recommendations of the 13th Finance Commission.

- It is the primary fund available with the State governments as part of their response to the notified disasters to meet expenditure on providing immediate relief to victims.
- The Centre contributes 75% of the allocation for general category States and Union Territories and 90% for special category States (northeastern, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir).
- The annual Central contribution is released in two equal installments as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.
- The allocation to each State depends on its population and utilisation of such funds in the previous financial year.
- The SDRF is audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) every year.
- To know more about the State Disaster Response Fund, click here.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express