UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 13-02-2021

India's First CNG Tractor

- India's first ever Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Tractor was launched.
- The CNG tractor's most important benefit for the farmer will be to save up to 50% on the fuel cost, as CNG is only Rs. 42 / kilogram.
- The conversion from diesel to CNG will be beneficial as it is a clean fuel with lowest carbon and pollutant content.
- It is also economical as it has zero lead and is non-corrosive, non-dilutive and non-contaminating which helps in increasing the life of the engine.
- Stubble can be used as a raw material for producing bio-CNG which will help the farmers to earn money by selling it to the bio-CNG production units in their locality.

Fish Pass

- Fish passes for hilsa constructed by the government in 2019, to redesign the navigation lock at the Farakka Barrage, has proved fruitful now.
- This fish pass project has facilitated the movement of hilsa upstream along the Ganga to its spawning grounds.
- [Until 1970s, the hilsa would swim the Ganga upstream to Allahabad.
- But the Farakka Barrage, which became operational on the Ganga in 1975, disrupted the westward movement of the hilsa.]
- Fish passes, also known as fish ladders or fish ways, aim to assist fish in crossing obstacles presented by dams and barrages.
- They usually consist of small steps that allow the fish to climb over the obstacles and enable them to reach the open waters on the other side.
- For the intervention to work, the water running over these ladders must be controlled - it must be adequate to catch the attention of the fish, but not too strong to deter them from swimming against it.

Hilsa

- Hilsa is an anadromous fish i.e., it lives most of its life in the ocean, but during the rainy season (spawning time), it moves towards the estuary, where the rivers of India and Bangladesh meet the Bay of Bengal.
- A large part of the shoal travels upstream in Padma and Ganga - some are known to move towards the Godavari, and the Cauvery.

Tholpavakkoothu Robots

- First-ever robotic shadow leather puppet was installed at the Palakkad District Heritage Museum.
- Tholpavakkoothu is Kerala's famous temple art, in which shadow leather puppets are used to tell stories from the epic Ramayana.
- It is also known as Nizhalkkoothu and Olakkoothu, and has its roots in Palakkad and neighbouring regions.
- It used to be performed in the Bhadrakali temples of Palakkad.
- This art is confined largely to Pulavar families of Palakkad district.

National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis

- The National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis (2017-25) was approved by Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare in 2017.
- It is being implemented in the entire country with the goal of Ending TB by 2025.
- Under NSP, 20%, 22% and 24% of the funds have been earmarked for social welfare assistance for 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 respectively.

NIKSHAY Portal

- It is the web enabled **patient management system** for TB control under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).
- It is developed and maintained by the Central TB Division (CTD), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), and WHO.
- It functions as the National TB Surveillance System and enables reporting of various surveillance data to the Government of India.
- For those private sector providers who notify TB patient on Nikshay, an incentive of Rs.500 on notification and another Rs.500 for updating the patient's treatment outcome are provided.
- [Private sector Providers - Private practitioners, Hospital, Laboratory & Chemist.]

NIKSHAY Poshan Yojana

- It was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It is being implemented from 2018. It is a centrally sponsored scheme under National Health Mission (NHM).
- It provides Rs. 500 per month to all TB patients towards **nutritional support** for the duration of their treatment.
- **Beneficiaries** - Notified TB patients across all States and UTs in India.

Vigyan Jyoti Programme

- Vigyan Jyoti programme has been expanded to 50 more districts for the year 2021-22, adding to the existing 50 districts across the country.
- It is an initiative to encourage girls to take interest in science and build a career in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- It was launched by the Department of Science & Technology (DST) to create a level-playing field for the meritorious girls to pursue STEM.
- It had been running successfully in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNV) since 2019.
- As a first step, it has been started at school level for girls of Class IX to Class XII to encourage them to pursue STEM courses in reputed institutions of the country.

Other Women-centric Programmes

- Apart from Vigyan Jyoti, DST runs other women-centric programmes to bring gender parity in Science & Technology (S&T) domain like,
    1. Women Scientists Scheme to help women with career-break,
    2. Indo-US Fellowship for Women in STEMM (WISTEMM) program where women scientists can work in research labs of USA,
    3. Consolidation of University Research for Innovation and Excellence in Women Universities (CURIE) programme to improve R&D infrastructure in women universities and
    4. Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) program to develop a comprehensive Charter and a framework for assessing Gender Equality in STEM.
- DST has also established Artificial Intelligence (AI) labs in women universities to foster AI innovations and to prepare skilled manpower for AI-based jobs in future.

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

- The Scheme has provision of a National Level Monitoring Committee (NLMC), State Level Monitoring Committee (SLMC) and District Level Monitoring Committee (DLMC) to monitor the scheme progress.
- NLMC has been constituted and many States have also formed SLMCs.
- A **Central Project Monitoring Unit** has been constituted to verify the applications for projects received on the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) portal.
- However, the final authority to sanction loans is with the **banks** after checking details and viability of the projects.
- As such only eligible and viable projects can get financed under the scheme

which will ensure proper utilization of the funds.

- Loans are sanctioned by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and Commercial Banks.
- Loans are given to the projects of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) and entities other than PACS for construction of warehouse/cold storage.
- To know more about Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, click here.

Source: AIR, PIB, The Indian Express, The Hindu

