UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 16-09-2020

Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020

- Lok Sabha passed the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020.
- The Bill will replace the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance which was promulgated in June 2020.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and empowers the central government in terms of production, supply, distribution, trade, and commerce of certain commodities.
- Highlights of the Bill are as follows

1. The bill empowers the central government to designate certain commodities including food items, fertilizers, and petroleum products as essential commodities.
2. It aims to "deregulate" agricultural commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, onions and potatoes.
3. Supply of the above mentioned food items can be regulated by the government under extraordinary circumstances as per the provisions of this bill.
4. The extraordinary circumstances include war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamity of grave nature.
5. It will help harnessing of economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment into agriculture sector helping modernization of food supply chain.
6. It will help both farmers and consumers while bringing in price stability.
7. The Bill also empowers the central government to regulate the stock of an essential commodity that a person can hold.
8. The provisions of the bill regarding the regulation of food items and the imposition of stock limits will however not apply to any government order relating to the Public Distribution System or the Targeted Public Distribution System.

Bills aimed at doubling Farmer Income

- The following bills are recently passed in Lok Sabha.
- These bills seek to replace the ordinances promulgated in June 2020 under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

1. **Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020**

- It aims to open up agricultural marketing outside APMC market yards for farmers, and also remove barriers to inter-State trade.
- It proposes an electronic trading in transaction platform.

2. **Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020**

- It aims at facilitating contract farming, where a private buyer contracts to purchase a crop at a certain price at the beginning of a season, transferring the risk of market unpredictability from the farmer to the corporate sponsor.
- It will empower farmers for engaging with processors, aggregators, wholesalers, large retailers and exporters on a level playing field without any fear of exploitation.
- It will reduce cost of marketing and improve income of farmers.

.Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)

- The Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) was launched in 2013 as a response to the call at Rio+20.
- It aims to support those countries wishing to embark on greener and more inclusive growth trajectories.
- PAGE brings together five UN agencies

1. UN Environment,
2. International Labour Organization,
3. UN Development Programme,
4. UN Industrial Development Organization,
5. UN Institute for Training and Research

- PAGE aims to assist countries in achieving and monitoring the emerging Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer

- International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer is observed on 16 September.
- This day commemorates the drafting of The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

- On 16th September 2009, the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol became the first treaties in the history of the United Nations to achieve universal ratification.
- The principal aim of the Montreal Protocol is to protect the ozone layer by taking measures to control total global production and consumption of substances that deplete it.
- The objective of the protocol is elimination of substances that deplete ozone layer on the basis of developments in scientific knowledge and technological information.

Also see: Kigali Amendment

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme

- The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme was instituted by a decision of the Indian Cabinet in 1964.
- It is a flagship programme of the Government of India to provide development assistance to developing countries across the globe.
- ITEC is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs, India and is fully funded by the Government of India.
- More than 10,000 training slots are offered every year to more than 160 partner countries for training courses in various areas like

1. Accounts,
2. Audit,
3. Management,
4. Small and Medium Enterprises (SME),
5. Rural Development,
6. Parliamentary Affairs etc.

- Under ITEC and its sister programme SCAAP (Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme) different countries across the globe are invited to share in the Indian developmental experience

SCAAP

- ITEC been an important component of India's assistance to African nations.
- To augment ITEC for African nations India has rolled out called the Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme (SCAAP).
- The ITEC/SCAAP Programme has the following components:

1. Training (civilian and defence) in India of nominees from ITEC partner

countries;
2. Projects and project related activities such as feasibility studies and consultancy services;
3. Deputation of Indian experts abroad;
4. Study Tours;
5. Gifts/Donations of equipment at the request of ITEC partner countries; and
6. Aid for Disaster Relief.

National Highways Excellence Awards

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has invited proposals for the National Highways Excellence Awards for the year 2020.
- The awards were instituted in the year 2018 are given every year in seven categories such as ,

1. Excellence in Project Management,
2. Excellence in Operation and Maintenance,
3. Green Highway,
4. Innovation,
5. Excellence in Highway Safety,
6. Excellence in Toll Management
7. Outstanding Work in Challenging Conditions.

- It aims to recognize companies which are performing exceptionally well in the construction, operations, maintenance and tolling stages of highway development as well as in the arena of road safety.

Source: PIB, AIR, Indian Express, UN

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