UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 24-02-2021

National Urban Digital Mission

- National Urban Digital Mission (NUDM) was launched by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- NUDM will create a shared digital infrastructure for urban India by working across the three pillars of **people, process, and platform** to provide holistic support to cities and towns.
- It will create a shared digital infrastructure that can consolidate and cross-leverage the various digital initiatives of the MoHUA.
- It will institutionalise a citizen-centric, principles-based and ecosystem-driven approach to urban governance and service delivery in 2022 cities by 2022, and across all cities and towns in India by 2024.
- NUDM has articulated a set of governing principles, and inherits the technology design principles of the National Urban Innovation Stack (NUIS), whose strategy and approach was released by MoHUA in 2019.
- The principles give rise to standards, specifications, and certifications, across the three pillars of people, process, and platforms.

India Urban Data Exchange

- India Urban Data Exchange (IUDX) is an open-source software platform developed by the Smart Cities Mission and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.
- It facilitates secure exchange of Smart City data amongst data platforms, 3rd party authenticated and authorised applications, and other sources.
- [This Smart City data could be monetised in the future, similar to the UPI for bank accounts and digital payments.]
- It serves as an interface for data providers and data users to share, request, and access datasets related to cities, urban governance, and urban service delivery.
- As the number of cities on IUDX expands, this will scale up to uniform sharing between data producers and data consumers across urban India.

SmartCode Platform

- It enables all ecosystem stakeholders to contribute to a **repository of open-**

source code for various solutions and applications for urban governance.
- It addresses the challenges that Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) face in the development and deployment of digital applications to address urban challenges.
- The source code available on the platform will be free to use without any licensing or subscription fees, thus limiting costs to those involved with customising the code and developing a locally-relevant solution.

Central Employment Guarantee Council

- The Central Employment Guarantee Council's (CEGC's) 23rd Meeting was held recently.
- In 2006, the Council was constituted under Section 10 of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005.
- The Central Government has constituted this Council to discharge the functions and perform duties assigned to it by or under the provisions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005.
- **Chairperson** - Minister of Rural Development, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
- It advises the Central Government on all matters concerning the implementation of this Act.
- It reviews the monitoring and redressal mechanism and recommends improvements required.
- It prepares annual reports to be laid before Parliament by the Central Government on the implementation of this Act.

Bio-restoration

- A new technology for ecological restoration (Bio-restoration) was developed by Indian scientists.
- It is helping in revival of mangroves degraded due to rising sea levels, climate change and human intrusion in the Sunderbans, West Bengal.
- [The Sundarbans is a protected wetland under the Ramsar Convention and is also a UNESCO World Heritage site.]
- Ecological restoration means reviving native ecosystem in degraded areas while maintaining diversity of original flora and fauna through regeneration but bringing down the regeneration period to 4 to 5 years.
- Restoration process begins with stabilising entire site by planting native salt tolerant grasses. It involves the use of growth-promoting bacteria.
- The restoration project was initiated with help from the Department of Biotechnology in 2013 and is now likely to be extended to 100 acres.
- The transplantation of propagated mangroves started in 2014, initially at a moderately degraded patch and then at severely degraded zones.

Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess

- The Budget 2021-22 has proposed a new levy, Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC) on 29 items.
- The purpose of the new AIDC is to raise funds to finance spending on developing agriculture infrastructure.
- The new cess will be levied on 29 products, such as gold, silver, as well as imported alcohol (excluding beer), imported apple, pulses, palm oil, urea, and petrol/diesel including branded ones.
- The new cess will only offset the reduction in Basic Custom Duty (BCD), Basic Excise Duty (BED) and Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) on unbranded and branded petrol-diesel.
- Thus it will not raise the tax incidence for consumers.

Cess

- Cess is a special-purpose tax levied over and above basic tax rates.
- Drawing power from **Articles 270 and 271** of the Constitution, the Centre collects cess and deposits it in the Consolidated Fund of India.
- The money collected is then transferred to a segregated fund to be used for specific purpose.
- But, this cess and surcharge money is not part of the divisible pool, from which devolution of Central taxes takes place to the States.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, Business Line, Down To Earth

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