UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 31-05-2020

MFP

- The Minor Forest Produce (MFP), also known as Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), is a major source of livelihood and provides essential food, nutrition, medicinal needs and cash income to a large number of STs who live in and around forests.
- An estimated 100 million forest dwellers depend on the Minor Forest Produce for food, shelter, medicines, cash income, etc.
- However, MFP production is highly dispersed spatially because of the poor accessibility of these areas and competitive market not having evolved.
- Consequently, MFP gatherers who are mostly poor are unable to bargain for fair prices.

MSP for MFP

- Union government to address the issue exiting in MFP has introduced MSP for MFP in 2013.
- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for marketing of non-nationalized / non monopolized Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and development of a value chain for MFP through Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- Under this

1. The responsibility of purchasing MFP on MSP will be with State designated agencies.
2. To ascertain market price, services of market correspondents would be availed by the designated agencies particularly for major markets trading in MFP.
3. The scheme supports primary value addition as well as provides for supply chain infrastructure like cold storage, warehouses etc.
4. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs will be the nodal Ministry for implementation and monitoring of the scheme.
5. The Minimum Support Price would be determined by the Ministry with technical help of TRIFED.

- Earlier, the scheme was extended only to Scheduled Areas in eight states and fixed MSPs for 12 MFPs, now it has extended to all states and UTs with 73 products in total.

Additions to MFP

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs has announced Inclusion of 23 additional Minor Forest Produce (MFP) items and stipulation of their Minimum Support Price (MSP), by this the list has expanded to 73 products.
- This is made under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme titled "Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of value chain of MFP".
- The increase is expected to provide an immediate and much needed momentum to procurement of Minor Tribal Produce across all States.
- 14 of the newly added items, otherwise agricultural produce, are not commercially grown in the North Eastern part of India but are found to grow in the wild in forests.
- Further following items available in forest areas across India have also been included in this notification with Minimum Support Price, such as

1. Van Tulsi seeds (Ocimumgratissimum)
2. Van Jeera (Vernonia anthelmintica)
3. Tamarind Seed (Tamarindusindica)
4. Bamboo Brooms (Thysanolaena maxima)
5. Dry Anola (Phyllnthusemblica) (Dry)
6. Kachri Baheda (Terminalia bellerica)
7. KachriHarra (Terminalia chebula)
8. Seed lac (Kerria lacca)

- The Ministry has provided flexibility to States to fix MSP upto 10% higher or lower than MSP declared by the Government.
- This notification is aimed to address several issues of exploitation by local traders, ensuring fair returns on their produce.

MFP through MSP and development of Value Chain of MFP

- Union Government had introduced a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for a select list of MFP through “Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce through Minimum Support price and development of Value Chain of MFP” Scheme in 2011 to provide a social safety net to these underprivileged forest dwellers, and to aid in their empowerment.
- TRIFED, is the apex national organization involved in the improvement of the livelihood and empowerment of tribal people, is the nodal agency for the implementation of the scheme.
- The Scheme has been a resounding success in offering basic support to the tribal gatherers and has helped in improving their lives.
- Under this 1,126 Vandhan Kendras have been set up as Tribal start-ups

onboarding over 3.6 Lakhs beneficiaries.
- Many of these units have commenced production and started sales of their value-added products.

Cyclone Amphan

- Super Cyclonic Storm Amphan was a powerful and deadly tropical cyclone that caused widespread damage in East India and Bangladesh in May 2020.
- It was the strongest tropical cyclone to strike the Ganges Delta since 2007 season.
- Causing over US$13 billion of damage, Amphan is also the costliest cyclone ever recorded in the North Indian Ocean, surpassing the record held by Cyclone Nargis of 2008.
- Amphan originated from a low-pressure area persisting a couple hundred miles (300 km) east of Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 13 May 2020.

Battle of Plassey

- The Battle of Plassey was a decisive victory of the British East India Company over the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies in 1757.
- The battle took place at Palashi (Anglicised version: Plassey) on the banks of the Hooghly River, about 150 kilometres (93 mi) north of Calcutta and south of Murshidabad, then capital of Bengal (now in Nadia district in West Bengal).
- The belligerents were the Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah, the last independent Nawab of Bengal, and the British East India Company lead by Robert Clive.
- Cause of battle - Siraj-ud-Daulah had become the Nawab of Bengal the year before, and he ordered the English to stop the extension of their fortification.
- Robert Clive bribed Mir Jafar, the commander-in-chief of the Nawab's army, and also promised him to make him Nawab of Bengal. Clive defeated Siraj-ud-Daulah at Plassey in 1757 and captured Calcutta.
- The battle helped the Company seize control of Bengal.
- Over the next hundred years, they seized control of the entire Indian subcontinent and Myanmar and briefly Afghanistan.

Jagadish Chandra Bose Garden

- Jagadish Chandra Bose Garden was earlier known as the Calcutta Botanic Garden, situated in Shibpur, Howrah near Kolkata.
- The gardens exhibit a wide variety of rare plants and a total collection of over 12,000 specimens spread over 109 hectares.
- It is under Botanical Survey of India (BSI) of Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

- The garden dates back to the time when the British were still traders in India.
- It was set up in 1787, thirty years after Robert Clive won the Battle of Plassey and consolidated East India Company's hold over Bengal — by Robert Kyd, a lieutenant-colonel in the British Army who was known to have a personal interest in horticulture.
- In creating the garden he was driven not so much by nature as by the idea of commercial gain, he wanted to grow plants that would bring money to the company.
- Recently, Cyclone Amphan tore through its 273-acre spread containing 15,000 plants belonging to 1,300 species, felling hundreds of trees.
- The Great Banyan, which predates the establishment of the garden, it survived two cyclones in the 19th century and in 1925, but now 15 to 20% of the tree was damaged by Amphan.

Ice Shelves

- The floating sheets of ice called 'ice shelves' play a multi-faceted role in maintaining the stability of a glacier.
- Ice shelves connect a glacier to the landmass, the ice sheet mass balance, sea stratification, and bottom water formation are important parameters for the balancing of a glacier.
- Latent and sensible heat processes do play important roles here.
- The insulation of ice shelves from atmospheric forcing is dependent on a temperature gradient that the ocean cavity beneath the ice shelves provides.
- It is the pressure exerted by the ice shelves upon the ocean cavity that determines this temperature gradient.
- There is always a stress on the sea ice and ice sheets themselves play an indirect role in reducing the amplitude of the ocean swell.
- This is assisted by the freezing atmospheric temperature, which is capable of promoting a change in the morphology of ice shelves.

Ameri Ice Shelf (AIS)

- The AIS is one of the largest glacier drainage basins in the world, located on the east coast of Antarctica, at about 70ºS Latitude, 70ºE Longitude.
- The AIS dynamics and mass balance help in understanding the changes in the global climate scenario.
- National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) in Goa has predicted that there would be a 24 per cent increase in the expansion of the Ameri Ice Shelf (AIS) boundaries in Antarctica by 2021 and another 24 per cent by 2026 from its 2016 positions.

- The prediction made by NCPOR is based on a 16-year-long satellite-based observation that covered an area of 60,000 sq km across the AIS.
- This study would help understand the ongoing changes in the ocean and atmospheric forcing better.
- NCPOR carried out this study based on the satellite data collected from 2001-2016.

NCPOR

- The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, (NCPOR) formerly known as the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR) is an Indian research and development institution, situated in Vasco da Gama, Goa.
- It is an autonomous Institution of the Department of Ocean Development (DOD), Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India which is responsible for administering the Indian Antarctic Programme and maintains the Indian government's Antarctic research stations, Bharati and Maitri.
- NCPOR complex is a home to a special low-temperature laboratory and is setting up a National Antarctic Data Centre and a Polar Museum.
- Apart from this the NCPOR operates in different fields or tasks:

1. Operating the Himadri and IndARC Arctic research stations in Svalbard, Norway.
2. Managing the oceanic research vessel ORV Sagar Kanya, the flagship of India's fleet of oceanographic study vessels.

National AI Portal

- Union Ministry for Electronics and IT, has launched India’s national Artificial Intelligence Portal called www.ai.gov.in
- This portal has been jointly developed by the Ministry of Electronics and IT and IT Industry.
- National e-Governance Division of Ministry of Electronics and IT and NASSCOM from the IT industry will jointly run this portal.
- This portal shall work as a one stop digital platform for AI related developments in India, sharing of resources such as articles, startups, investment funds in AI, resources, companies and educational institutions related to AI in India.
- The portal will also share documents, case studies, research reports etc.
- It has section about learning and new job roles related to AI.

Responsible AI for Youth

- The aim of this Program is to give the young students of our country a

platform and empower them with appropriate new age tech mind-set, relevant AI skill-sets and access to required AI tool-sets to make them digitally ready for the future.

- The Program has been created and launched by the National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics & IT in collaboration with Intel India, with support from Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L), and Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- DoSE&L will help reach-out to State Education Departments to nominate teachers as per eligibility criteria.
- The National Programme is open to students of classes 8 - 12 from Central and State government-run schools (including KVS, NVS, JNV) from across the country - all 28States and 8Union Territories and aims to bring about a change in the thought process and create a bridge for the digital divide.
- The Program will be implemented in a phase-wise manner and in its first phase, each of the State Education Department will nominate 10 teachers as per the eligibility criteria.
- Teachers may also self nominate themselves by fulfilling the eligibility criteria.

Energy Progress Report

- The Energy Progress Report was released by the International Energy Agency, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank and the World Health Organization.
- The United Nations-mandated SDG 7 is aimed at ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy by 2030.
- According to the report, the global electrification rate progressed steadily from 2010 to 2018, rising to 90 per cent of the world’s population in 2018 from 83 per cent in 2010.
- But the effort made since 2016 has not been sufficient, between 2016 and 2018, electrification grew by just 0.82 percentage points per year.
- According to the report, it is believed that to achieve the target of universal access of electricity by 2030, the world needed to do electrification with an increase of 0.87 percentage points a year, This was required to be done before COVID-19 era.
- In 2018, India was among top three countries with largest deficits regarding access to electricity. Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and India had the three largest deficits: 85 million, 68 million and 64 million people respectively.
- The world needed progress with three percentage points to achieve the goal of universal access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking since 2010, the report said.

- But it progressed at an annualized average of just 0.8 percentage points.
- The latest data on SDG 7 progress, before the onset of the pandemic, demonstrated that there was a need to accelerate efforts towards targets at urgent basis.

Source: PIB, Down to Earth, the Hindu

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