



## Detailed News Articles: 27 May 2019

May 27, 2019 Shiksha IAS Academy

### 1. [No wind, no sun: green projects in limbo](#)

Renewable energy sector is stifled by a host of issues from low tariffs to lack of government push.

#### **Background:**

- In 2014, the Solar power had barely begun to take roots in India, and the country had a total installed solar power capacity of 2,632 MW.
- The industry was taking baby steps with the aid of cheap, imported modules.
- Anti-dumping duties ranging between ₹6 and ₹47 per watt of solar modules imported from China, Malaysia, Taiwan and the U.S. was recommended by the Ministry of Commerce.
- The anti-dumping duty was going to kill the industry. On the other hand, a clutch of domestic players had set up module manufacturing plants in India, eyeing business from a sunrise industry.
- The new government then made a pragmatic choice. It said 'no' anti-dumping duties; it also told the domestic manufacturers, that the government-owned companies would buy from them.
- The way the government handled a rather ticklish problem engendered confidence, which strengthened soon when the government set up an ambitious target of 175 GW for renewable energy — 100 GW for solar, 60 GW for wind and the rest for biomass and small hydro — to be met by 2022.
- Since the solar target was five times that set earlier by the previous government, it caused ripples of excitement around the world.

#### **Concerns:**

- Five years down the line, the Indian renewable industry is in a state of disarray.
- Wind and solar power capacity additions have been far less than satisfactory and hardly on the path to meeting the targets.
- Both sectors are buffeted by a range of issues, some caused by the government.
- And, outside of wind and solar, too, little has happened.
- For instance, solar heating is a segment that gives the returns in the clean energy space, but no policy has been made.
- Offshore wind is still distant despite international players responding overwhelmingly when asked to express interest.

#### **Details:**

- Singular achievement of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy was bringing down tariffs of wind and solar power that is sold to the electricity distribution companies.
- The reason for sad state of affairs is over-emphasis on keeping tariffs low.



- Many feel that such a low tariff is unviable and, quoted by bidders only in a rush to grab projects.
- However, the policy makers have taken that number to be some kind of a benchmark. Ceilings on tariffs have been brought in for solar and wind so as to keep tariffs depressed.
- Solar energy projects have had to face uncertainties in terms of safeguard duties, GST rates and a falling rupee.
- Wind installations have been crippled by land problems in Gujarat, as most of the developers flocked to the state.

#### **Way forward:**

- The government must plan out a long-term vision to look into other emerging areas where India could leapfrog and lead the world — such as ocean, geo-thermal energy, biomass and small hydro.
- To avoid flocking of developers to the windiest sites, the government must bring in State-wise or even sub-station-wise tenders, so that the setting up projects could be more spread out.
- The government must opt for closed tenders, where the bidder who offers the best price bags the project, as opposed to the current method of holding auctions, in which bidders try to outbid each other.
- Delays paying the dues to the energy companies by the State government-owned utilities must be eliminated.

#### **2. [Fire and laissez-faire: fix accountability for Surat tragedy](#)**

Fire at an illegal structure in Surat claimed the life of 22 students. The building did not have a no-objection certificate from the Fire Department.

#### **Issue:**

- Man-made disasters like these highlight the gap between India's dreamy visions of smart cities and the cruel reality of urban chaos and lawlessness.
- There exists a culture of laissez-faire urbanisation that city governments have bred and which the courts allow to be pursued without severe penalties.
- India's frightful record on fire safety is reflected in the death of 17,700 people countrywide in fires in both public and residential buildings during 2015, according to the latest available data from the National Crime Records Bureau.
- Criminal culpability of the administrative machinery and officials who sanctioned unsafe buildings, often in return for bribes, remains largely unaddressed.
- There is a lack not only of a culture of fire safety, people do not even bother with simple things such as creating multiple exits and buying reasonably priced fire extinguishers and alarms for buildings.
- In addition there is lack of public sensitivity to fire tragedies in the country.

#### **Details:**



- According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics, around 62 people die in fire incidents each day.
- The Surat fire cannot be called an accident, since there are reports of notices having been served to the builder on the risks, but not pursued by the Fire Department.
- Civic officials have displayed unforgivable indifference, since two deaths occurred in another coaching centre in the city late last year.
- That tragedy should have led to a comprehensive review of public buildings.

#### **Way forward:**

- The governments must make fire safety the priority it should be. Fire safety protocols must be updated nation-wide
- Inquiry into the disaster should go into any deviations from the sanctioned plan for the commercial building housing the coaching centre, and the role of urban planning officials in allowing it to come up.
- It is essential for the judiciary to send out the message that there will be no tolerance to corruption and evasion in the enforcement of building rules and fire safety.
- Beyond suspending a few officials and filing cases against the building owners, there is a need to make an example of sanctioning and enforcement authorities.
- The unwavering message must be that the citizens demand accountability.
- There is also an urgent need to ensure that the fire departments are well equipped.
- Mandating compulsory insurance for all public buildings against fire risk and public liability can bring about a change to the way architects and builders approach the question of safety, since the insurer would require a reduction of risk and compliance with building plans. That would be a start to rewriting India's sad record on fire safety.

#### 3. [In S. Africa, a unique telescope link offers new view of stars](#)

- Scientists in South Africa have launched the world's first optical telescope linked to a radio telescope, combining "eyes and ears" to try to unravel the secrets of the universe.
- The device forms part of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project in the remote Karoo desert, which will be the world's most powerful radio telescope system.

#### **Square Kilometre Array**

- The SKA project is an international effort to build the world's largest radio telescope, with eventually over a square kilometre of collecting area.
- The scale of the SKA represents a huge leap forward in both engineering and research & development towards building and delivering a unique instrument, with the detailed design and preparation now well under way.



- The SKA will eventually use thousands of dishes and up to a million low-frequency antennas that will enable astronomers to monitor the sky in unprecedented detail.
- Its unique configuration will give the SKA unrivalled scope in observations, largely exceeding the image resolution quality of the Hubble Space Telescope.
- South Africa's Karoo host the core of the high and mid frequency dishes, ultimately extending over the African continent. Australia's Murchison Shire host the low-frequency antennas.

### **MeerLITCH**

- The latest move combines the new optical telescope MeerLITCH — Dutch for 'more light' — with the recently-completed 64-dish MeerKAT radio telescope, located 200 kilometres away.
- This is the eye, with the MeerKAT being the ears as a radio telescope.
- The MeerLITCH uses a main mirror just 65 cm in diameter and a single 100 megapixel detector measuring 10 cm x 10 cm.
- Astronomers have previously had to wait for a cosmic incident to be picked up by a radio telescope and then carry out optic observations afterwards.
- The project has been six years in the making by a joint-team of South African, Dutch and British scientists.

### **Purpose of MeerLITCH**

- MeerLICHT boasts of a huge field of view that allows astronomers to see an area 13 times the size of the full moon in exquisite detail, and pick up objects one million times fainter than is possible with the human eye.
- The priorities for MeerLITCH is the study of black holes, neutron stars and stellar explosions, which must be scrutinized quickly before they fade away.
- The study of exploding stars across the universe will gain a whole new dimension.
- Flashes of radio emission known as Fast Radio Bursts may now be 'caught in the act'. Hopefully we can finally determine the origin of these enigmatic flashes.

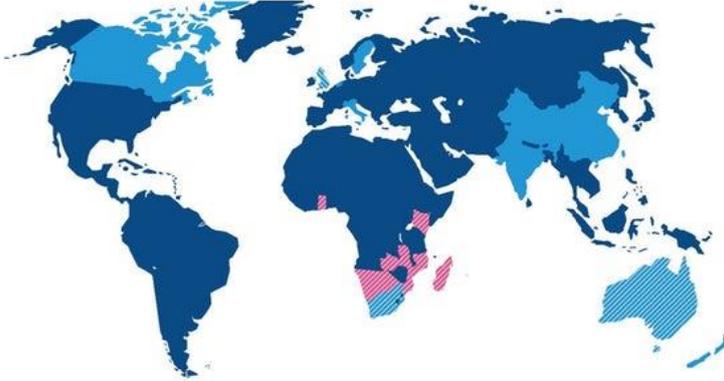
### **Members of SKA**



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Your Dreams, Our Mission!



- Full members
- SKA Headquarters host country
- SKA Phase 1 and Phase 2 host countries



- African partner countries (non-member SKA Phase 2 host countries)

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Thank you!