



Daily Current Affairs Dated On 28-June-2018

General Studies-2

Higher Education Commission of India Act

In a landmark decision, a Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill 2018 which seeks to repeal UGC Act and provides for setting up of Higher Education Commission of India has been prepared by the Ministry of HRD and placed in public domain for comments and suggestions.

The focus of Higher Education Commission of India will be on improving academic standards and the quality of Higher Education.

The draft Act is in accordance with the commitment of Government for reforming the regulatory systems that provide for more autonomy and facilitate holistic growth of the education system which provides greater opportunities to the Indian students at more affordable cost.

Highlights of the Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill 2018

1. The focus of the Commission will be on improving academic standards and quality of higher education, specifying norms for learning outcomes, lay down standards of teaching/research etc.
2. It will provide a roadmap for mentoring of institutions found failing in maintaining the required academic standards.
3. It shall have the power to enforce its decisions through legal provisions in the Act,
4. The Commission shall have the power to grant authorization for starting of academic operations on the basis of their compliance with norms of academic quality.
5. It will also have the powers to revoke authorization granting to a higher education institution where there is a case of wilful or continuous default in compliance with the norms / regulations.
6. It will also have the power to recommend closure of institutions which fail to adhere to minimum standards without affecting students' interest.
7. The Commission will encourage higher education institutions to formulate a Code of Good Practices covering promotion of research, teaching and learning.

General Studies-3



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Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

Why in News?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Mechanism for procurement of ethanol by Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to carry out the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme- Revision of ethanol price for supply to Public Sector OMCs.

All distilleries will be able to take benefit of the scheme and large number of them are expected to supply ethanol for the EBP programme.

Benefits from Price Revision:

Remunerative price to ethanol suppliers will help in reduction of cane farmer's arrears, in the process contributing to minimizing difficulty of sugarcane farmers.

Ethanol availability for EBP Programme is expected to increase significantly due to higher price for C heavy molasses based ethanol and enabling procurement of ethanol from B heavy molasses and sugarcane juice for first time.

Increased ethanol blending in petrol has many benefits including reduction in import dependency, support to agricultural sector, more environmental friendly fuel, lesser pollution and additional income to farmers.

The sugarcane and sugar production in this sugar season is very high leading to dampening of sugar prices.

Consequently, sugarcane farmers' dues have increased due to lower capability of sugar industry to pay the farmers. Government has taken many decisions for reduction of farmer's dues.

This is also in line with the National Policy on Biofuels -- 2018 announced by the Government during May, 2018 which has widened the scope of raw material for ethanol production.

Background:

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme was launched by the Government in 2003 on pilot basis which has been subsequently extended to the Notified 21



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States and 4 Union Territories to promote the use of alternative and environmental friendly fuels.

This intervention also seeks to reduce import dependency for energy requirements and give boost to agriculture sector.

Strategic Petroleum Reserves

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved establishment of additional 6.5 Million Metric Tonne (MMT) Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) facilities at two locations, i.e. Chandikhol in Odisha and Padur in Karnataka, including construction of dedicated SPMs (Single Point Mooring) for the two SPRs.

The SPR facilities at Chandikhol and Padur will be underground rock caverns and will have capacities of 4 MMT and 2.5 MMT respectively.

Government had announced setting up of two additional SPRs during the budget announcement for 2017-18.

The in principle approval is to take up the project under PPP model to reduce budgetary support of Government of India.

Benefits of SPR:

ISPRL has already constructed underground rock caverns for storage of 5.33MMT of crude oil at three locations, viz. Vishakhapatnam (1.33 MMT), Mangalore (1.5 MMT) and Padur (2.5 MMT).

The total 5.33 MMT capacity under Phase-I of the SPR programme is currently estimated to supply approximately 10 days of India's crude requirement according to the consumption data for FY2016-17.

Cabinet's approval for establishing additional 6.5 MMT Strategic Petroleum Reserve facilities will provide an additional supply of about 12 days and is expected to augment India's energy security.

The construction phase of the SPRs at Chandikhol and Padur is likely to generate significant direct & indirect employment opportunities in the states of Odisha and Karnataka.



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Sagarmala Project:

Why in News?

The Ministry of Shipping's flagship programme for port-led-prosperity Sagarmala' received the '**Gold Award**' in infrastructure sector in the recently concluded **52nd Skoch Summit 2018** in New Delhi.

The Sagarmala Programme also received the '**Order of Merit**' at the Summit.

About SKOCH Award:

The **Skoch Awards** recognize leadership and excellence in accelerating socio-economic changes.

These awards have become a benchmark of best practices in India in the fields of governance, infrastructure, finance, banking, technology, corporate citizenship, economics and inclusive growth.

About Sagarmala Project :

Sagarmala is the flagship programme of the Ministry of Shipping for port-led-development of the country through harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location of India on key international maritime trade route.

The Sagarmala Programme hinges on four pillars, namely;

Port Modernization,

Port Connectivity,

Port-linked Industrialization and

Coastal Community Development.

The programme aims to double the share of domestic waterways (inland & coastal) in the modal mix, generate logistic cost savings of Rs. 35,000-40,000 Cr per annum, boost merchandise exports by USD 110 Billion and enable creation of 1 Crore new jobs, including 40 Lac direct jobs, in the next 10 years.



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Europe's first solar panel recycling plant

WHERE?

Europe's first solar panel recycling plant was recently inaugurated in France. The new plant is located in Rousset, southern France.

Details:

- Waste management firm Veolia signed a contract with solar recycling group PV Cycle France to recycle 1,300 tonnes of solar panels this year.
- The plant in Rousset uses robots to take panels apart and recover glass, silicon, plastics, copper and silver, all of which can be reused to create new panels.

Need for Solar panel recycling plant?

Solar panels have an estimated lifespan of 25 to 30 years, meaning that many of the first generation built in the 1990s are now being decommissioned. The huge growth in solar power in recent years also means that finding a sustainable and circular solution to ageing panels is of prime importance.

Way ahead:

The International Renewable Energy Agency estimates that by 2050 there will be between 60 to 78 million tonnes of PV panel waste around the world. China and the US, as leaders in solar installation, will also need to establish recycling plants to deal with this waste, but that this could unlock significant economic benefits.

At the moment, however, only the European Union has adopted waste regulations specifically aimed at tackling future solar PV waste.



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Hayabusa-2

A Japanese probe has reached an asteroid 300 million km away to collect information about the birth of the solar system and the origin of life after a more than three-year voyage through deep space.

The Hayabusa2 probe successfully settled into an observation position 20 km above the Ryugu asteroid, officials from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said on Wednesday..

The successful mission came just days before the UN's International Asteroid Day on June 30, a global event to raise awareness about the hazards of an asteroid impact and technological progress to counter such a threat.

Mission Objectives:

Scientists hope to glean clues about what gave rise to life on the earth from samples taken from Ryugu, which is thought to contain relatively large amounts of organic matter and water.

Photos of Ryugu — which means “Dragon Palace” in Japanese, a castle at the bottom of the ocean in an ancient Japanese tale — show an asteroid shaped a bit like a spinning top with a rough surface.

The Hayabusa2 probe was in good shape and is now ready to start exploring the asteroid over the coming 18 months, JAXA said.

The next stage is to identify suitable sites to take samples from once the probe touches down on the asteroid.

That probe returned from a smaller, potato-shaped, asteroid in 2010 with dust samples despite various setbacks during its epic seven-year odyssey and was hailed as a scientific triumph.