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POSHAN Abhiyaan

Why in News?

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India has organized 2nd meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under **POSHAN Abhiyaan**.

About POSHAN abhiyaan:

1. The Government of India has set-up POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) which was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 8th March, 2018 from Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.
2. The programme through use of technology, a targeted approach and convergence strives to reduce the level of Stunting, Under-nutrition, Anemia and Low Birth Weight in Children, as also, focus on Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers, thus holistically addressing malnutrition
3. The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively. The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.
4. To ensure a holistic approach, all 36 States/UTs and 718 districts will be covered in a phased manner by the year 2020.
5. Never before has nutrition been given such prominence at the highest level in the country.

National Policy on Bio-Fuels

Why in News?

Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan has said that with the objective of ensuring adequate and sustained availability of domestic feedstock for biofuel production, increasing Farmers Income, Import Reduction, Employment Generation and Waste to Wealth Creation, the Government has notified the National Policy on Biofuels-2018.



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About NPB:

The policy categorizes biofuels as "Basic Biofuels", i.e., such as bio ethanol & biodiesel and "Advanced Biofuels" such as Second Generation (2G) ethanol, bio-CNG, Third Generation Biofuels, etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.

It also includes promotion of advanced biofuels through various incentives, off-take assurance and viability gap funding.

With an objective of increasing production of ethanol, this Policy allows production of ethanol from damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice etc. which are unfit for human consumption.

Additionally, during an agriculture crop year, when there is projected over supply of food grains as anticipated by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, the policy allows conversion of surplus quantities of food grains to ethanol, based on the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.

Benefits :

Use of damaged food grains and surplus food grains for production of ethanol will increase its availability for Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme, resulting in

- increasing the blending percentage
- increasing farmer's income
- saving of foreign exchange and addressing environmental issues.

During the ethanol supply year 2016-17, 66.5 crore litres of ethanol was blended in Petrol which resulted in foreign exchange impact of Rs. 1749 crore and carbon emission reduced to the extent of 13.23 lakh tonnes.

About EBP:

The Government through Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), is implementing Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme under which, OMCs sell ethanol blended petrol with ethanol blending percentage upto 10%, subject to the availability of ethanol.

The quantity of ethanol available for EBP Programme is less than the quantity required to achieve blending targets as ethanol produced in the country is also used in Potable and Chemical Sector.



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In the National Policy on Biofuels – 2018, Government has allowed B-heavy molasses, sugarcane juice and damaged food grains as feedstocks to increase availability of ethanol.

Setting Up of Second Generation Ethanol Bio-Refineries

Why in News?

Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan has said that oil PSUs have entered into Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with State Governments and Technology Providers for setting up five 2G ethanol bio-refineries.

On 25.12.2016, foundation stone of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited's first 2G ethanol bio-refinery in Bathinda, Punjab, has been laid.

About 2-G Ethanol:

Second-generation biofuels, also known as **advanced biofuels**, are fuels that can be manufactured from various types of non-food [biomass](#).

Biomass in this context means plant materials and animal waste used especially as a source of fuel.

First-generation [biofuels](#) are made from the [sugars](#) and [vegetable oils](#) found in food crops using standard processing technologies.

Second-generation biofuels are made from different feedstocks and therefore may require different technology to extract useful energy from them.

Second generation feedstocks include [lignocellulosic biomass](#) or woody crops, agricultural residues or waste, as well as dedicated non-food energy crops grown on marginal land unsuitable for crop production.

The term second-generation biofuels is used loosely to describe both the 'advanced' technology used to process feedstocks into biofuel, but also the use of non-food crops, biomass and wastes as feedstocks in 'standard' biofuels processing technologies if suitable.



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This causes some considerable confusion. Therefore it is important to distinguish between second-generation feedstocks and second-generation biofuel processing technologies.

Concerns:

The development of second-generation biofuels has seen a stimulus since the [Food vs. fuel](#) dilemma regarding the risk of diverting farmland or crops for [biofuels](#) production to the detriment of [food supply](#).

The biofuel and [food price](#) debate involves wide-ranging views, and is a long-standing, controversial one in the literature.

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Railway Safety Fund

As announced by Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech 2017-18, a Fund namely 'Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh' has been introduced in 2017-18 for works relating to renewal, replacement, upgradation of critical safety assets under Capital segment of Budget.

About the Fund:

The Fund has a corpus of ` 1 lakh crore over a period of five years, with an annual outlay of ` 20,000 crore.

The Fund is utilized to finance identified works under plan heads Track Renewals, Bridge Works, Signalling and Telecommunication Works, Road Safety Works of Level Crossings and Road Over/Under Bridges, Rolling Stock, Traffic Facilities, Electrical Works, Machinery and Plant, Workshops, Passenger Amenities and Training.

The Fund has been introduced in 2017-18 and in the first year of its inception, an expenditure of ` 16091 crore has been incurred. An outlay of ` 20,000 crore has been allocated in Budget Estimates 2018-19 also.

All safety related measures are taken in full earnestness and all maintenance and other activities are carried out with the help of existing manpower, mechanized means and need based outsourcing.



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Institutional Mechanism:

Planning Directorate of Railway Board has been assigned the task of regularly monitoring physical and financial progress of works funded through 'RRSK'.

In addition, an independent 'RRSK Monitoring Committee' has been created headed by CEO, NITI Aayog to regularly examine the RRSK performance.

The RRSK progress/performance shall also be reviewed annually by the 'Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)'.

Optimum utilization of fly ash

As informed by Ministry of Power, ash produced by thermal power plants is a proven resource material for many applications of construction industries and currently is being utilized in Manufacture of Portland Pozzolana Cement (PPC), fly ash bricks/blocks/tiles manufacturing, road embankment construction & low lying area development, in agriculture as soil conditioner etc.

Further, following efforts have been made to make optimum utilization of fly ash as an environmentally sustainable and economically viable product:

- i. GST rates on fly ash and its products have been reduced to 5%.
- ii. To facilitate 100% ash utilization by all coal based thermal power plants, a web portal for monitoring of fly ash generation and utilization data of Thermal Power Plants and a mobile based application titled "ASHTRACK" has been launched by the Government that will help to establish a link between fly ash users and power plants executives for obtaining fly ash for its use in various areas.
- iii. A Workshop and Video Conferences to make use of the Web Page for data updation have been conducted by CEA and NTPC.
- iv. Ash-park has been developed and awareness programme for utilisation of fly ash and its products have been conducted.

About Fly Ash:

Fly ash,, is a coal combustion product that is composed of the particulates (fine particles of burned fuel) that are driven out of coal-fired boilers together with the flue gases.

Ash that falls to the bottom of the boiler is called bottom ash.



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In modern coal-fired power plants, fly ash is generally captured by electrostatic precipitators or other particle filtration equipment before the flue gases reach the chimneys.

Together with bottom ash removed from the bottom of the boiler, it is known as **coal ash**.

Composition:

Depending upon the source and composition of the coal being burned, the components of fly ash vary considerably, but all fly ash includes substantial amounts of silicon dioxide (SiO_2) (both amorphous and crystalline), aluminium oxide (Al_2O_3) and calcium oxide (CaO), the main mineral compounds in coal-bearing rock strata.

Finalisation of National Artificial Intelligence Mission

A Task Force on Artificial Intelligence (AI) for India's Economic Transformation was constituted and The Task Force gave its report recently.

Recommendations:

It has recommended an Inter-Ministerial National Artificial Intelligence Mission to act as a nodal agency for coordinating AI related activities in India.

NITI Aayog has been tasked with formulation of a National Strategy Plan for AI in consultation with Ministries and Departments concerned, academia and private sector.

NITI Aayog has prepared and placed on its website on 4th June 2018 a discussion paper on National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence identifying following five sectors to be focused upon:

- Healthcare,
- Agriculture,
- Education,
- Smart Cities and Infrastructure,
- Smart Mobility and Transportation.

In order to create a policy framework and to develop the ecosystem for Artificial Intelligence, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, has constituted four committees covering all the aspects of AI. These Committees are:



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- i. Committee on platforms and data for AI,
- ii. Committee on leveraging AI for identifying National Missions in key sectors,
- iii. Committee on mapping technological capabilities, key policy enablers, skilling, re-skilling and R&D
- iv. Committee on cybersecurity, safety, legal and ethical issues.

What is AI?

Artificial intelligence (AI), sometimes called **machine intelligence**, is [intelligence](#) demonstrated by [machines](#), in contrast to the **natural intelligence** displayed by humans and other animals.

In [computer science](#) AI research is defined as the study of "[intelligent agents](#)": any device that perceives its environment and takes actions that maximize its chance of successfully achieving its goals.

Colloquially, the term "artificial intelligence" is applied when a machine mimics "cognitive" functions that humans associate with other [human minds](#), such as "learning" and "problem solving"