

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**

NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and Adobe have signed a Statement of Intent (SOI) to collectively drive the charter of developing creative skills and spreading digital literacy across all Atal Tinkering Labs in India.

Key facts:

- As per MoU, Adobe shall be adopting 100 schools under Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) initiative.
- Adobe shall be implementing its Digital Disha Program in ATLs, under which free licenses of Adobe Spark premium shall be offered to ATLs.
- Launched in 2018, the Adobe Digital Disha Programme is aimed at driving synergies in creative thinking and technology-based learning.

Anti-Tinkering Labs:

- With a vision to 'Cultivate one Million children in India as Neoteric Innovators', Atal Innovation Mission is establishing Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) in schools across India.
- Objective: The objective of this scheme is to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds; and inculcate skills such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing etc.
- Financial Support: AIM will provide grant-in-aid that includes a one-time establishment cost of Rs. 10 lakh and operational expenses of Rs. 10 lakh for a maximum period of 5 years to each ATL.
- Eligibility: Schools (minimum Grade VI – X) managed by Government, local body or private trusts/society can set up ATL.

Significance of ATLs:

- Atal Tinkering Labs have evolved as epicenters for imparting these 'skills of the future' through practical applications based on self-learning.
- Bridging a crucial social divide, Atal Tinkering Labs provide equal opportunity to all children across the spectrum by working at the grassroot level, introducing children to the world of innovation and tinkering.

Atal Innovation Mission: The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. It is mandated to create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country and revolutionizing the innovation eco-system – touching upon the entire innovation life cycle through various programs. It has two core functions:

- Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs.
- Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.

Parents Responsibility and Norms for Accountability and Monitoring (PRANAM) Bill

- Assam has launched the PRANAM Commission, a panel set up to look after the issues concerning a Bill brought in for protection of parents of state government employees.
- The Parents Responsibility and Norms for Accountability and Monitoring (PRANAM) Bill, stated to be the first-of its-kind Bill in the country, is an effort to protect elderly parents of government employees in their times of need.
- Objective of the bill: To ensure that no state government employee ignores their elderly parents and unmarried differently-abled siblings.

Key Features:

- The PRANAM Bill makes it mandatory for the state government employees to look after their parents and unmarried differently-abled siblings who do not have their own sources of income.
- Under the bill's provisions, if the PRANAM Commission gets a complaint that parents of a state government employee are being ignored, then 10 or 15 per cent of the employee's salary will be deducted by the government and paid to the parents or differently-abled siblings.
- The employees of private companies and the central government working in the state would also be covered by the bill at a later stage.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**A law for the CBI**

The CBI, legally known as Delhi Special Police Establishment, has been in controversies lately. It can not function in a state unless the matter is referred to it by a high court or the Supreme Court or by the consent of the state government concerned.

Need to make a law for CBI

- There was always a demand for an all-India legislation to give the CBI statutory powers over central government employees posted anywhere in the country.
- State governments have resisted such a law on the plea that a central agency would take away the powers of policing vested in them.
- The ruling party in a state, sometimes genuinely and many times on flimsy grounds, has denied permission to the CBI to investigate matters. Recently, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, and earlier Karnataka, Nagaland and Sikkim had withdrawn consent to the CBI to operate.
- Recent turmoil was in Kolkata, when the CBI team tried to enter the residence of the Kolkata police commissioner, either to interrogate him or to intimidate him.

Other Instances

- There have been other instances when the CBI faced off with other law enforcement agencies like the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Income Tax Authorities (ITA), Directorate of Enforcement and police forces of different states.
- These were also due to the CBI lacking legal powers to operate on an all-India basis.
- Such instances do not sit well with a system where rule of law is paramount.

Conclusion: There is an urgent need to giving statutory backing to the CBI on an all India basis with a constitutional amendment, with the consent of at least half of the state legislatures. Otherwise, such conflict will recur and eventually give rise to unnecessary controversies.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Inclusive Internet Index 2019 released**

The Inclusive Internet Index, commissioned by Facebook and conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit, seeks to measure the extent to which the Internet is not only accessible and affordable, but also relevant to all, allowing usage that enables positive social and economic outcomes at individual and group level.

The aim of the Inclusive Internet Index is to provide researchers and policymakers with the information they need to enable the beneficial use of the Internet, irrespective of age, gender, location or background.

The index assesses the performance of 100 countries in four categories of inclusion: Accessibility, Affordability, Relevance and Readiness. Each category incorporates key indicators of internet inclusion, including quantitative measures such as network coverage and pricing, and qualitative measures such as the presence of e-inclusion policies and the availability of local-language content.

Key findings:

- The digital divide appears to be widening at the bottom of the income pyramid, risking a reversal of past progress.
- Gender gaps in Internet access continue to narrow globally, led by low and lower middle-income countries.
- Concerns about online privacy remain high, and trust in information from governments on the Internet has retreated in the West.
- Men have more Internet access than women globally but low and lower middle income countries narrowed the gender gap in 2018.
- Inclusion for women and those with disabilities have improved, with low income and lower-middle-income countries driving the progress.

Performance of various countries:

- Sweden has topped the rankings followed by Singapore and the US.
- India has been ranked 47th.
- The UK, Namibia, Ireland, Austria, Chile and South Africa are the top performers of the year in terms of gender equality. All these countries had female digital skills training plans.

WELFARE SCHEMES**PradhanMantriJI-VAN Yojana**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the PradhanMantri JI-VAN (JaivIndhan-VatavaranAnukoolfasalawasheshNivaran) Yojana. It aims for providing financial support to Integrated Bio-ethanol Projects using lignocellulosic biomass and other renewable feedstock.

PM JI-VAN Scheme

- Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has targeted to achieve 10% blending percentage of Ethanol in petrol by 2022.
- Therefore, an alternate route viz. Second Generation (2G) Ethanol from biomass and other wastes is being explored by MoP&NG to bridge the supply gap for EBP programme.
- The PM JI-VAN Yojana is being launched as a tool to create 2G Ethanol capacity in the country and attract investments in this new sector.
- Centre for High Technology (CHT), a technical body under the aegis of MoP&NG, will be the implementation Agency for the scheme.
- The policy allows procurement of ethanol produced from molasses and non-food feed stock like celluloses and lignocelluloses material including petrochemical route.

Features of the Scheme

- The scheme focuses to incentivise 2G Ethanol sector and support this nascent industry by creating a suitable ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and increasing Research & Development in this area.
- The ethanol produced by the scheme beneficiaries will be mandatorily supplied to Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to further enhance the blending percentage under EBP Programme.
- Apart from supplementing the targets envisaged by the Government under EBP programme, the scheme will also have the following benefits:
- Meeting Government of India vision of reducing import dependence by way of substituting fossil fuels with Biofuels.
- Achieving the GHG emissions reduction targets through progressive blending/ substitution of fossil fuels.
- Addressing environment concerns caused due to burning of biomass/ crop residues & improve health of citizens.
- Improving farmer income by providing them remunerative income for their otherwise waste agriculture residues.
- Creating rural & urban employment opportunities in 2G Ethanol projects and Biomass supply chain.
- Contributing to Swachh Bharat Mission by supporting the aggregation of non-food biofuel feedstocks such as waste biomass and urban waste.
- Indigenizing of Second Generation Biomass to Ethanol technologies.

Implementation

- The JI-VAN Yojana will be supported with total financial outlay of Rs.1969.50 crore for the period from 2018-19 to 2023-24.
- Under this project, 12 Commercial Scale and 10 demonstration scale Second Generation (2G) ethanol Projects will be provided a Viability Gap Funding (VGF) support in two phases:
 - Phase-I (2018-19 to 2022-23)
 - Phase-II (2020-21 to 2023-24)

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

- Government of India launched Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme in 2003 for undertaking blending of ethanol in Petrol.
- It aimed to address environmental concerns due to fossil fuel burning, provide remuneration to farmers, subsidize crude imports and achieve forex savings.
- Presently, EBP is being run in 21 States and 4 UTs of the country.
- Under EBP programme, OMCs are to blend upto 10% of ethanol in Petrol.

ENVIRONMENT**Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) Initiative**

The government recently handed over the 100th Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Compressed Bio-Gas(CBG) Entrepreneur (producer) under the SATAT scheme.

About the initiative:

- The initiative is aimed at providing a Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) as a developmental effort that would benefit both vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs.
- Compressed Bio-Gas plants are proposed to be set up mainly through independent entrepreneurs. CBG produced at these plants will be transported through cascades of cylinders to the fuel station networks of OMCs for marketing as a green transport fuel alternative.
- The entrepreneurs would be able to separately market the other by-products from these plants, including bio-manure, carbon-dioxide, etc., to enhance returns on investment.
- It is planned to roll out 5,000 Compressed Bio-Gas plants across India in a phased manner.
- This initiative is expected to generate direct employment for 75,000 people and produce 50 million tonnes of bio-manure for crops.
- There are multiple benefits from converting agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste into CBG on a commercial scale:
- Responsible waste management, reduction in carbon emissions and pollution.
 - Additional revenue source for farmers.
 - Boost to entrepreneurship, rural economy and employment.
 - Support to national commitments in achieving climate change goals.
 - Reduction in import of natural gas and crude oil.
 - Buffer against crude oil/gas price fluctuations.

Background: Bio-gas is produced naturally through a process of anaerobic decomposition from waste / bio-mass sources like agriculture residue, cattle dung, sugarcane press mud, municipal solid waste, sewage treatment plant waste, etc. After purification, it is compressed and called CBG, which has pure methane content of over 95%.

CBG: Compressed Bio-Gas is exactly similar to the commercially available natural gas in its composition and energy potential. With calorific value (~52,000 KJ/kg) and other properties similar to CNG, Compressed Bio-Gas can be used as an alternative, renewable automotive fuel. Given the abundance of biomass in the country, Compressed Bio-Gas has the potential to replace CNG in automotive, industrial and commercial uses in the coming years.

Compressed Bio-Gas can be produced from various bio-mass/waste sources, including agricultural residue, municipal solid waste, sugarcane press mud, distillery spent wash, cattle dung and sewage treatment plant waste. The other waste streams, i.e, rotten potatoes from cold storages, rotten vegetables, dairy plants, chicken/poultry litter, food waste, horticulture waste, forestry residues and treated organic waste from industrial effluent treatment plants (ETPs) can be used to generate biogas.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If you feel you are born with hard luck, then remember only thing that overcomes hard luck is hard work.