



PLUTUS ACADEMY

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1. September 29: International Day of Awareness on Food Loss and Waste Reduction

Every year the International Day of Awareness on Food Loss and Waste Reduction is observed on 29th September 2020. This is the first ever observance of the day by the Food Agriculture Organization, United Nations. It was designated by the UN in 2019.

Highlights

Globally 14% of food produced is lost between harvest and retail. All the resources put in go waste when food is wasted. This includes land, energy, water, labour and capital. Also, disposal of food waste in landfills leads to greenhouse gas emissions that then contributes to climate change.

Food Loss Index

It has been created by the Food Agriculture Organization to focus on the percentage of food removed from the supply chain. Also, the index helps to monitor Sustainable Development Goal 12.3.

Sustainable Development Goal

The SDG 12.3 says that the world shall halve per capita global food waste and reduce food losses along production, supply chain and post-harvest losses. The SDG 12 aims to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Significance

Food waste and losses have been increasing slowly since 2014. This year, the day is celebrated under the following theme

Theme: Stop Food Loss and waste for the People for the planet

Indian Food Sharing Alliance

It is an initiative of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to help India in solving its food waste and hunger crisis. This is being done by integrating various partner organizations.

Food Loss in India

India ranks 102nd in Global Hunger Index among 117 countries. Around 21 million tonnes of wheat is wasted in India every year. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Rs 50,000 crore worth food is wasted every year in India. 25% of fresh water used to produce food is ultimately wasted in terms of food loss. Also, 300 million barrels of oil used to produce food is wasted annually.

2. Defence Acquisition Council approves Rs 2,900 crores

The Defence Acquisition Council approved Rs 2,900 crores for the acquisition of Indian Defence Equipment.

Highlights

The procurement includes 72,000 assault rifles from the United States. It also includes procurement of domestic and foreign vendors. The other procurement under the approval includes

- Smart Anti Airfield Weapon and Static High Frequency Trans-receiver sets. This is to be bought under the Buy Indian category.
- High Frequency Radio Sets. These sets will enable seamless communication for the Indian Army and Air Force Field Units. They are to be procured at a cost of Rs 540 crores.
- Smart Anti Field weapon that is to be procured at Rs 970 crores. This will add firepower of Indian Navy and Indian Air Force.
- DAC has approved the procurement of SIG SAUER Assault Rifles costing around Rs 780 crores.

Defence Acquisition Procedure

The Defence Acquisition Procedure was unveiled recently by the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. It was first introduced in 2002. The new procedure includes provisions to encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to establish manufacturing hubs for both import and export. This is to be done giving protection to the interests of domestic industries of India.

The Defence Procurement Procedure contains processes that has to be followed by Indian Armed Forces in developing or obtaining defence weapon systems. The main aim is to achieve self-reliance by promoting indigenous design and get the weapons in a time bound manner without delays.

Defence Acquisition Council

It is the highest decision-making body in defence ministry. It was formed after the Group of Ministers recommended Reforming the National Security System in 2001 in post Kargil War. The following are the main functions of DAC

- The DAC approves 15-year long term integrated perspective plan for defence forces
- It categorises acquisition proposals related to Buy, Make and Buy and Make.
- It makes decisions on “Transfer of Technology”.

3.September 29: World Heart Day

Every year, the World Heart Day is observed on September 29. The day is observed to create awareness about cardiovascular diseases. It was initiated by the World Heart Foundation.

Highlights

The day is important as cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death that claims 17.9 million lives a year. Also, the day is important as it spreads awareness on ill effects of consumption of tobacco, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet. With these precautions alone, the world can prevent 80% of premature deaths from heart diseases.

India's measures

- The National Health Policy of India launched in 2017 aims to reduce the mortality from Cardiovascular Diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases to 25% by 2025
- National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes and Cardiovascular diseases and was launched in 2010. The programme focuses on early diagnosis, health promotion and management. The key features of the programme are as follows
 - Health Promotion through behavioural change
 - Outreach camps for opportunistic screening
 - Managing chronic non-communicable diseases, strokes, diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and cancer.
 - To provide support to diagnosis and cost-effective treatment

Sustainable Development Goal

The Non-Communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease threatens progress of 2030 agenda of sustainable development. One of the targets of SDG is to reduce premature deaths from Non-Communicable Diseases by one-third by 2030.

Heart Diseases in India

In India, more urbanised states face higher risks of cardiovascular diseases. Kerala faces the highest risk of 19.5% followed by Jharkhand at 13.5%. In North, South and North East the Body Mass Index is higher. This has led to increased hypertension and diabetes.

Smoking is another major cause of cardiovascular diseases in India, especially among poorer states such as Jharkhand.

Lifestyle and dietary patterns are other factors that play a major role in these variations.

4. India brings Indo-Pacific and ASEAN Policies under one Unit

The Ministry of External Affairs is to create a new Oceania Territorial Division with Australia at the centre. It will integrate ASEAN divisions and the Indo-Pacific within it. This will now align policies in the region stretching western Pacific to the Andaman Sea.

Significance

The region targeted by India (western Pacific to Andaman sea) is considered by China as a strategic backyard.

In 2019, India created the Indo-Pacific division to include Indian Ocean Rim Association, QUAD and ASEAN. The Indian Ocean Division was created earlier to bring together Maldives, Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles. Later Comoros, Madagascar and Reunion Islands were included. These countries are important to India for the following reasons

- India has its strong Naval Base in Maldives.
- In 2018, Seychelles and India signed an agreement to build a joint military facility in Assumption Island, Seychelles.
- Agalega Island of Mauritius was leased to Indian Navy for the development of strategic assets.
- Reunion Islands is a French Naval Base. In March 2020, India and France conducted joint patrols from Reunion Islands for the first time.
- India established its first military listening post in foreign soil at Madagascar.

Bases and Stations of India in foreign soil

The following are bases and stations operated by India in foreign soil

- Tajikistan: Farkhor Air Base. It is operated by Indian Air Force. Apart from India, the other countries to operate military bases from the country are USA, Russia and Germany
- Bhutan: The Indian Military Training Team is permanently stationed in Bhutan

- **Mauritius:** India operates and maintains a coast surveillance radar system
- **Oman:** Duqm has been established for Indian Navy and Indian Air Force.
- **Seychelles:** Coast Surveillance Radar System has been deployed and maintained by India
- **Madagascar:** Listening post has been set

India-Australia

The step is being undertaken by India as Australia is currently playing a larger role in India's outreach to the region. Australia recently has shown interests in participating in Malabar exercises. It is a military exercise that is held annually between India, US and Japan. With this, the QUAD grouping will become stronger.

India needs International cooperation

With the Chinese increasing their influence in the Indian Ocean, it is essential for India to seek international help to counter the influence. This can be well achieved through QUAD grouping. This is because the QUAD countries Japan, Australia and USA have similar views as that of India on Chinese aggression in the region.

5.India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership: Key Facts

The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Danish Counterpart Mette Frederiksen held a virtual bilateral summit. During the summit, the leaders established the Green Strategic Partnership to fight against Climate Change.

Green Strategic Partnership

The Partnership is mutually beneficial to both the countries to advance political cooperation, create jobs, expand economic relations. It will focus on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The partnership is to be built on the existing Joint Commission for Cooperation that was signed between the countries in 2009. The Joint Commission for Cooperation envisages cooperation in economic and commercial fields, political field, science and technology, energy, environment, education and culture.

Key Highlights of the Partnership

- To work closely as partners in addressing global challenges and find solutions on green energy transition and climate change
- To support and promote rule based multilateral systems. The system will provide strong cooperation to face urgency and tackle global challenges in climate change and energy. Also, the system will work towards a common

commitment towards IEA (International Energy Agency), ISA (International Solar Alliance) and IREA (International Renewable Energy Agency).

PM Modi highlighted the fact that Denmark has been constantly participating at the Vibrant Gujarat Summit since 2009.

India-Denmark

Denmark ranks 26th among the foreign investors of India. The bilateral trade between India and Denmark has doubled from 503.9 million USD in 2003 to 1222 million USD in 2012.

Significance of Green Energy in India

Under the Nationally Determined Contributions of Paris Accord on Climate Change, India has pledged to increase the installed power generation capacity by 40% and reduce emission intensity by 33% to 35% from 2005 level. In 2015, India set a target of achieving 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022. This includes 60 GW of wind energy, 175 GW of solar, 10 GW of biomass and 5 GW of small hydro power.

In order to achieve the above targets, India has established strong international cooperation. The Green Strategic Partnership established with Denmark will help India achieve the targets.

6. Namami Gange: Six Mega Projects, "Ganga Avalokan" to be inaugurated

PM Modi is to inaugurate six mega projects under Namami Gange Mission through video conference.

About the Projects

The projects to be inaugurated are as follows

- Construction of 68 MLD STP
- Upgradation of 27 MLD at Jagjeetpur, Haridwar
- Construction of 68 MLD Jagjeetpur Project
- Inauguration of 26 MLD in Rishikesh
- Construction of 18 MLD STP at Darai, Haridwar
- Inauguration of 5 MLD STP at Chirpani. Also, two STP at Badrinath.

MLD is Million Litres per Day and STP is a Sewage Treatment Plant.

Ganga Avalokan

PM Modi along with these projects is to inaugurate Ganga Avalokam. It is the first museum of Ganga that is dedicated to showcase the biodiversity, rejuvenation and culture in Ganga river. The museum is located in Haridwar.

Book

The Prime Minister will also launch a book "Rowing Down the Ganges" that was co-published by National Mission for Clean Ganga and Wildlife Institute of India.

Other highlights

The Prime Minister will also release a logo of Jal Jeevan Mission, Magdarshika for Gram Panchayats and Paani Samitis under Jal Jeevan Mission.

Current Scenario

Around 30 projects have been completed in Uttarakhand under the Namami Gange Mission. These projects are aimed at treating pollution from 17 Ganga towns in the state.

Namami Gange

It is an umbrella programme was established to achieve two objectives as follows

- Effective Abatement of Pollution
- Conservation and Rejuvenation of National River Ganga.

It is operated under the Ministry of Jal Shakti. It is implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga. The main pillars of Namami Gange Programme are as follows

- River Front Development and river surface cleaning
- Bio-Diversity and Afforestation
- Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure and Industrial Effluent Monitoring
- Public Awareness

Recently the World Bank approved a five-year loan of Rs 3,000 crores under Namami Gange Project. So far 313 projects were cleared under the mission at a cost of Rs 25,000 crores.

7.Senior IAS Officer PD Vaghela appointed TRAI Chairman

Senior IAS Officer PD Vaghela was appointed as the TRAI (Telecom Regulatory of India) Chairman. HE has succeeded RS Sharma.

About PD Vaghela

He is a Gujarat-Cadre IAS Officer. He is currently in the Department of Pharmaceuticals that operates under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. Prior to this, he was the commissioner of commercial tax in Gujarat. He played a key role in the roll out of GST, 2017.

About RS Sharma

Usually, the TRAI chairman is appointed for a term of three years. However, RS Sharma was provided a rare two-year extension till 30th September, 2020 though he turned 65 in 2018 and attained the age of retirement. Prior to chairman of TRAI,

Sharma led the creation of Aadhar. He was the director of UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India) between 2009 and 2013.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

It was set up under the TRAI Act of 1997. It was set up to have a suitable environment for the growth of telecommunications industry in India.

Structure

It is led by a chairman, two full-time members and not more than two part-time members. All these members are appointed by the Central Government. The members should have professional experience in telecom industry, accountancy, finance, law, management and consumer affairs.

TDSAT

The Telecom Dispute Settlement Appellate Tribunal adjudicates disputes, protects interests of service providers, protects interests of consumers. It joins the TRAI in regulating the telecom services.

Telecom Sector in India

India is currently the world's largest telecommunication market with 1.2 billion registered subscribers. It is the second highest revenue earner for the GoI after income tax. Thus, the chairman of TRAI has a major role towards the revenue of the government.

Government Measures

In order to boost the telecom sector, the GoI has launched the following plans

- National Digital Communication Policy, 2018
- The FDI cap in the telecom sector was increased to 100% from 74%.
- Digital India programme was launched under which all the sectors are to be connected through the internet

8.WHO to launch 120 million Rapid Diagnostic Tests for COVID-19

The World Health Organization announced that it will launch 120 million rapid diagnostic tests for COVID-19 joining hands with its partners. This will help lower- and middle-income countries to fill in the testing gap with richer countries..

Highlights

The WHO launched rapid diagnostic tests will be antigen based. The price of a single test kit is to be 5 USD per piece. The programme is to begin by October 2020. It will

help in reaching areas where it is harder for the PCR tests to reach. The PCR tests are generally used by rich countries as it is expensive and requires a greater number of experts to conduct the test.

Antigen Tests

The Antigen based rapid diagnostic tests look for proteins or antigens that are found on the surface of the virus. They are considered as less accurate and much faster than the high-grade genetic tests called the PCR tests.

Current Scenario

The high-income countries are carrying out 292 tests per day per 100,000 people. On the other hand, the low-income countries are conducting 14 tests per 100,000 people. Therefore, it is highly essential to increase the testing capabilities of these countries.

Significance

According to WHO, the rapid diagnostic tests hold great significance where community transmission is widespread and where nucleic acid amplification based diagnostic tests (NAAT) are unavailable. PCR is a NAAT test.

ACT-Accelerator initiative

It is led by the WHO. It is Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator. It is a global collaboration to accelerate the development, production and equitable access to new COVID-19 diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics. The main aim of the initiative is to level the products available in rich and poor countries alike.

The countries have begun the initiative with a commitment of 8 billion USD as initial funding.