

# NEWS TODAY

## FERTILISER STOCKS DEplete AFTER DIP IN IMPORTS

- **Data from Department of Fertilisers** shows that **stocks** of Di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), Muriate of potash (MOP) and other major non-urea fertilisers **have fallen**.
  - The current low stocks raise **serious concerns over the availability in the coming rabi season**.
  - **Soaring international prices have resulted in lower imports**.
  - Further, the **maximum retail price (MRP)** as decided by government for selling of fertilisers **dis-incentivises imports** as the company neither makes profit nor loss.

### • Fertiliser Policies by Government

- **For Urea - New Pricing Scheme** - The difference between **cost of production and selling price/MRP** is paid as a **subsidy/concession** to manufacturers.
- **Neem Coated Urea Policy, 2015** made it mandatory for domestic fertilizer firms to "Neem coat" at least 75 percent of their urea production.
- **For Phosphatic and Potash (P&K) - Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Policy, 2010** – govt fixes subsidy on an annual basis based on the weight of the different macro/micronutrient contained in the fertilizer.
- **City Compost policy, 2016** - assistance of Rs 1,500 per tonne of city compost will be provided to fertilizer companies for marketing and promotion of city compost.



○ **India's fertiliser consumption in FY20 was about 60 million tonnes (mt)** of which 55% was urea. This is expected to rise by 5 mt FY21.

- Total domestic fertiliser production stood at 37 (mt) till March 2021, of which urea output was 21 million tonnes and rest 23mt were imported.

## A RECORD 71 INDIAN UNIVERSITIES HAVE QUALIFIED FOR THE TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2022

- This is a significant improvement in the ranking **up from 63 last year, but none of them made it to the top 300 list**.

- **The Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore** is India's highest-ranked institution.
- **Reputation, publications especially international co-authorship, citations** are key areas where India made progress.

### • India's Higher education sector

- **With 51,649 institutions and 37.6 million students**, India has one of the **largest higher education systems in the world**.
- India aims to get to **50% Gross Enrolment Ratio by 2030** from current 27.1%.
- **This sector is facing issues like**
  - Poor quality of institutions.
  - Only 45.9% of graduates are employable.
  - Total education expenditure is only 3.1% of GDP of which only 40% is allocated to higher education.

### • Recent Government steps

- **Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP)** to improve the quality and accessibility of higher education during 2019-2024.
- **Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE)** by 2022.
- **Scheme for Transformational and Advanced Research in Sciences (STARS)** for funding to faculty of HEIs for research projects in basic sciences.



### ○ Other Govt Steps

- An annual web-based **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)**.
- **University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations** pertaining to recognition, accreditation of the higher educational institutions.
- **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan**.

# PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY) FACES HURDLES, NEEDS RELOOK

- PMFBY is an **all-encompassing crop insurance scheme** that was introduced to relieve farmers' agricultural uncertainties.
  - The scheme is facing hurdles **resulting in dissatisfaction of farmers, opting out of state governments and loss of interest by insurance companies.**
- Challenges in implementation of PMFBY**
  - Delayed payments to farmers** - Insurance companies do not pay farmers on time. Also, states do not release their share of premium timely.
  - Insurance companies compensate farmers less** than the premium they have collected.
  - Administrative challenges**
    - States do not finalise on time last season's yield data**, the key parameter to endorse farmers' claims, even as the next season's harvest starts coming in.
    - There are **no proper land records**.
    - States in the North-East**, face challenges such as **lack of interest by insurance companies and lack of State budgetary resources** to pay their share of the premium.
  - Technological issues - **Making assessment and forecasting rain and other weather** conditions accurately is challenging.

Under PMFBY, premium to be paid by farmers is fixed at 1.5% for rabi, 2% for kharif crops and 5% for cash crops.

Earlier, till 2020, the **balance premium was split equally between the Centre and states.**

Now, centre's contribution is 30% for unirrigated and 25% for irrigated crops.

For the north-east region, the share of subsidy is 90:10 between the Centre and state.

## 'CAPACITY BUILDING ON INTEGRATED RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT WITH A FOCUS ON GEOSPATIAL TECHNOLOGY IN RIVERINE ECOSYSTEM'

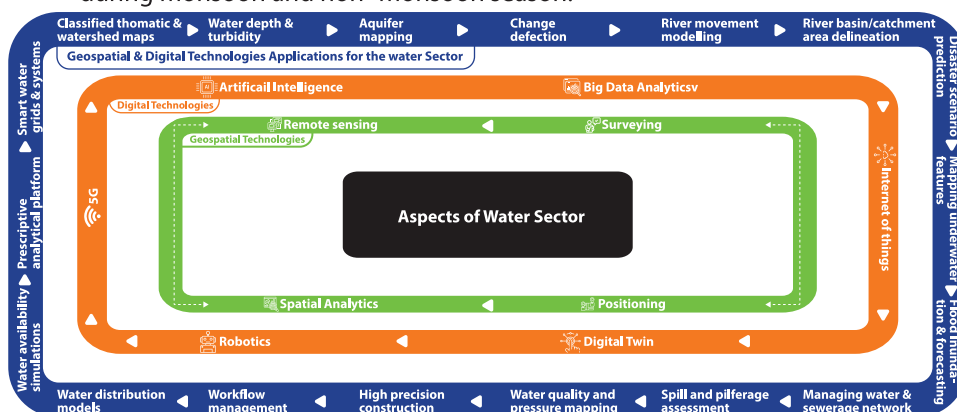
- National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** signed a MoU with **South Asian Institute for Advanced Research and Development (SAIARD)** to strengthen river basin management by using geospatial technology.
  - Geospatial technology**
    - It allows tracking a questioned object and referring it to a specific location.
    - It helps in **studying real earth geographic information using Geographical Information System (GIS), Remote Sensing, Artificial intelligence, Internet of things (IoT) etc.**
- Application of geospatial technology in India's water sector**
  - Indian Remote Sensing Portals for the Water Sector**
    - Bhuvan-WBIS (Water Bodies Info System):** Sensor derived water bodies information is utilized to generate spatial map of surface water bodies.
    - National Information System for Climate and Environment Studies (NICES)** provides national level accurate and long-term climate database generation.
    - India-WRIS (Water Resources Info System):** Contains information related to Water Resources through dashboards as well as modules on water resources projects and tools for GIS layer editing.
  - Jal Jeevan Mission** - For GIS Mapping of Water Supply and Sewerage Infrastructure etc.
  - Namami Gange** - Preparation of base maps and 3D Models.
  - Dam Rehabilitation and improvement project** - Remote Sensing and GIS for dam site selection and monitoring progress.
  - National River Linking Project (NRLP)** - Understand the characteristic of rivers during monsoon and non-monsoon season.

## GOVERNMENT TELLS UTILITIES TO SHIP IN COAL AS DEMAND SURGES

- India has urged **utilities to import coal despite being world's second largest producer with fifth-largest reserves, as several power plants are on the verge of running out of fuel** due to a surge in power demand.
  - Data from Central Electricity Authority showed **over half of the 135 coal-fired plants had less than a week's supply of coal left.**
  - Coal-fired power accounts for more than **70% of India's electricity generation.**
- Government initiatives for coal sector**
  - Opening up of commercial coal mining** for Indian and foreign companies in the private sector.
  - Mineral Laws (Amendment) Act, 2020** introduced for ensuring ease of doing business.
  - Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015** enabled allocation of coal mines through transparent auctions.
  - Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved a new coal linkage policy** to ensure adequate supply of the fuel to power plants through reverse auction.
  - UTTAM (Unlocking Transparency by Third Party Assessment of Mined Coal) Application for coal quality monitoring.**

### Challenges for coal sector in India

- Delayed land, environment and forest clearances.
- Higher operation and maintenance costs.
- Quality of Indian coal is such that it is high in silica and alumina.



## ALSO IN NEWS



### Special Drawing Rights (SDR)

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has made an **allocation of SDR 12.57 billion to India**.
- The **SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves**.
  - Its value is based on a basket of five currencies: **The U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling**.
  - It is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF.
  - Rather, it is a potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF members.



### Peer to Peer (P2P) lending

- **P2P investments industry** in India estimates state that it will **grow to \$5 billion by 2023**, and globally it is expected to be worth nearly **\$1 trillion by 2050**.
- P2P is an **online framework** that **connects lenders and borrowers** on an online platform without the presence of intermediaries.
  - It offers borrowers **lower interest rates and enables higher returns for investors** due to fewer overhead expenses.
  - P2P products in India are **regulated by the RBI as a type of NBFCs**.



### ZAPAD Exercise

- It is one of the **theatre level exercises of Russian armed forces** and will focus primarily **on operations against terrorists**.
  - **17 countries** have been invited by Russia for the exercise, **9 participating countries and 8 observer countries**.
- **India** is amongst one of the **participating countries**.



### Raptors (Bird of Prey)

- As per new analysis of IUCN and BirdLife International, **160 species of birds of prey endangered worldwide**.
  - Threats are result of **habitat loss, pollution, human-wildlife conflicts and climate change**.
  - Indonesia had most raptor species, followed by Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.
- India has signed **Raptor MoU** for conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia that **covers 76 species of birds of prey**, of which over 50 occur in India, including **critically endangered vulture**.
  - MoU is **not legally binding**.



### State of the World's Trees 2021

- It has been released by London-based Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI).
  - BGCI is an **independent UK charity** established in 1987 to **link the botanic gardens of the world in a global network for plant conservation**.
  - It is a membership organisation, representing **botanic gardens in more than 100 countries around the world**.
- According to the report, **India's 18% tree species are threatened with extinction**. **India is also home to 650 endemic tree species** that are not found anywhere else.



### Saath Initiative

- **Saath was recently inaugurated by the Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor**.
  - It is a **Rural Enterprises Acceleration Programme for women** associated with Self Help Group (SHGs).
  - It will **stress on mentoring and market linkages** of products created by women associated with SHGs.
  - Also, these women would be **imparted knowledge about marketing, packaging and branding**.
- This initiative aims to impart skills and convert such **women's' businesses into Higher Order Enterprises**.





#### • Orang National Park

- Assam removes Rajiv Gandhi name from **Orang National Park**.
- It is located on the **north bank of the Brahmaputra River**.
- It was established as **wildlife sanctuary in 1985** but declared as **National Park in 1999**.
- Also known as **mini Kaziranga**, inhabited by **one-horned rhinoceros**.



#### • Chilika Lake

- **Irrawaddy dolphin** found dead in **Chilika**.
- Chilika is **Asia's largest brackish water and world's second largest coastal lagoon**.
- Chilika Lake was the **first Indian wetland of international importance** to be designated under the **Ramsar Convention in 1981**.
- Irrawaddy dolphin- **Endangered** (IUCN Red List).



Clarifications for News Today dated 1st Sept, 2021.

1) News related to UNSC resolution, 2nd Bullet, 3rd Sub-point- The grouping being referred to here is Taliban.

2) News related to Solar power, under 3rd Bullet related to ISA, the membership was initially limited to countries within the tropics but later it was made open to all UN member countries.

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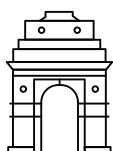


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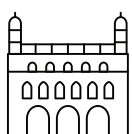
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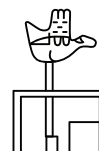
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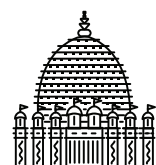
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