News Analysis (11 Mar, 2019)

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Saudi Investment in Strategic Oil Storage

India has invited Saudi Arabia to partner in building strategic oil reserves and further invest in India's refining and Petrochemical sectors.

> India is concerned about global oil balance and supplies for the following reasons:
> - India's energy needs are primarily met through imports.
> - Concerns about rising international crude oil prices. The need for uninterrupted supplies of crude oil and LPG to India in view of the OPEC+ cuts.
> - Sanctions imposed by the US administration on state-owned oil company of Venezuela.
> - The US pull-out from 2015 accord with energy-rich Iran has limited the options for India to meet its energy demands.

Strategic Petroleum Reserves

- Strategic petroleum reserves are huge stockpiles of crude oil to deal with any crude oil-related crisis like the risk of supply disruption from natural disasters, war or other calamities.
- India's strategic crude oil storages are currently located at Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Mangaluru (Karnataka), and Padur (Karnataka).
- Recently, the government had announced setting up of two additional facilities at Chandikhol (Odisha) and Padur (Karnataka).
- The concept of dedicated strategic reserves was first mooted in 1973 in the US, after the first oil crisis.
- The concept of massive caverns deep below the surface of the earth has been traditionally marketed as an energy security measure that can be a defence against shortage of oil supply in future due to an attack or invasion.
- Underground storage is, by far the most economic method of storing petroleum products because the underground facility rules out the requirement of large swathes of land, ensures less evaporation and, since the caverns are built much below the sea

level, it is easy to discharge crude into them from ships.

Need

- The IEA predicts that by 2020, India could well be the largest oil importer, increasing the country's vulnerability to threats of physical supply disruptions leading to sharp price fluctuations.
- Besides the energy security, there is a commercial angle to it as well. Even as limited storage option would offer India the leverage to be a serious player in the international oil markets, with the option of releasing inventory when prices surge and recharging reservoirs whenever the crude is on a downcycle.

Way forward

- Experts point to the option of storage being leased out to West Asian refiners, especially since it reduces their freight costs into Southeast Asian markets.
- The three storage facilities to be implemented in the first phase can hold 13 days of India's crude stock requirement where International Energy Agency (IEA) recommends 90 days.
- Therefore, there is a need to build more stockpiles before oil prices rise back given that OPEC nations have recently decided to reduce oil production to bring stability in global oil prices, in a meet held recently.

Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

With the announcement of elections to the 17th Lok Sabha, the Model Code of Conduct has come into effect immediately.

- The MCC is a **set of guidelines issued by the <u>Election Commission (EC)</u>** to regulate political parties and candidates prior to elections. Basically, the code spells out the do's and don'ts for elections.
- **This is in keeping with Article 324 of the Constitution**, which mandates EC to conduct free and fair elections to the Parliament and State Legislatures.
- **It is not statutory** but Political Parties, Candidates and Polling Agents are expected to observe the norms, on matters ranging from the content of election manifestos, speeches and processions, to general conduct etc.
- **The code comes into force on the announcement of the poll schedule and remains operational till the process is concluded.**
- The EC has devised several mechanisms to take note of the violation of the code, which include joint task forces of enforcement agencies and flying squads. The latest is the introduction of the cVIGIL mobile app through which audio-visual evidence of

malpractices can be reported.

- The **cVIGIL App** provides **time-stamped, evidence-based proof of the Model Code of Conduct / Expenditure Violation, having live photo/video** with **auto location data**.
- Any citizen can lodge a complaint through the Mobile App. Flying Squads will then investigate the matter and the Returning Officer takes the decision.
- The status of cVIGIL can be shared with the cVIGIL complainant within a specified time limit.

MCC: Legal Enforcement

- Though MCC does not have any statutory backing, but the Code has come to acquire teeth in the past decade because of its strict enforcement by the EC.
- **Certain provisions of the MCC may be enforced through invoking corresponding provisions in other statutes such as the Indian Penal Code, 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure,1973, and Representation of the People Act, 1951.**
  - For Example; Inciting hatred through political speeches, Appealing to caste and community feelings of voters, Intimidating or bribing voters and distributing liquor or holding public meetings in the 48 hours preceding the close of polling, are all such offences for which candidates can be tried under the **Indian Penal Code** or the **Representation of the People Act 1951.**
- **In 2013, the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, recommended making the model code of conduct legally binding.** The committee observed in a report on electoral reforms that most provisions of the code are already enforceable through corresponding provisions in other statutes. It recommended that the MCC be made a part of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- **The EC argues against making it legally binding.** According to it, elections must be completed within a relatively short time or close to 45 days, and judicial proceedings typically take longer, therefore it is not feasible to make it enforceable by law.

Karnataka to Use Cloud Seeding

Karnataka government has decided to use cloud seeding operations to enhance rainfall during the monsoons of 2019 and 2020.

Karnataka is currently facing a drought-like situation. Through cloud seeding, the State government is hoping to influence the upcoming monsoon and capture as much water as possible.

What is Cloud Seeding?

Cloud seeding is the process of spreading either dry ice or more commonly, silver iodide aerosols, into the upper part of clouds to try to stimulate the precipitation process and form rain.Cloud seeding uses planes to spray clouds with chemicals to condense smaller particles into larger rain droplets.

Cloud Seeding Methods

- **Hygroscopic cloud seeding** disperses salts through flares or explosives in the lower portions of clouds. The salts grow in size as water joins with them.
- **Static cloud seeding** involves spreading a chemical like silver iodide into clouds. The silver iodide provides a crystal around which moisture can condense.
- **Dynamic cloud seeding** aims to boost vertical air currents, which encourages more water to pass through the clouds, translating into more rain.

Applications of Cloud Seeding

- **Agriculture:** It creates rain, providing relief to drought-stricken areas. E.g.: 'Project Varshadhari' in Karnataka in 2017.
- **Power Generation:** Cloud seeding experiments have shown to augment production of hydroelectric during the last 40 years in Tasmania, Australia.
- **Water Pollution Control:** Cloud seeding can help to maintain minimum summer flows of the rivers and dilute the impact of treated wastewater discharges from municipalities and industries.
- **Fog Dispersal, Hail Suppression, and Cyclone Modification:**
  During the winter the cloud seeding programme is used to increase the mountain snowpack so that additional runoff is received during the spring melt season.
- "Project Sky Water" of U.S.A. in 1962 for weather modification through cloud seeding aimed at fog dispersal, hail suppression, and cyclone modification.
- **Tackle Air Pollution:**
  Cloud seeding can potentially be used to settle down toxic air pollutants through the rain. E.g.: Recently, Central Pollution Control Board along with other researchers mulled the use of cloud seeding to tackle Delhi's air pollution.
- **Tourism:** Cloud seeding can transform typically dry areas much more hospitable to enhance tourism.

Challenges

- **Potential Side-effects:** The chemicals used in cloud seeding might be potentially harmful to plants, animals, and people, or the environment.
- **Abnormal Weather Patterns:** it might ultimately change climatic patterns on the planet. Places that normally receive moisture might start experiencing drought due to the artificial process of adding chemicals to the atmosphere to stimulate rain.

- **Costly:** It involves processes such as delivering chemicals to the sky and releasing them into the air by flare shots or airplanes, which involves huge costs and logistic preparation.
- **Pollution:** As the artificial rain falls, seeding agents like silver iodide, dry ice or salt will also fall. Residual silver discovered in places near cloud-seeding projects are considered toxic. As for dry ice, it can also be a source of greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming, as it is basically carbon dioxide.

Important Facts For Prelims (11th March 2019)

NCRB's 34th Inception Day

- Recently, 34th Inception day of <u>National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)</u>, was celebrated in New Delhi.
- National Crime Records Bureau was formed on 11th March 1986.
- **NCRB is mandated to empower the Indian Police with Information Technology (IT)** and is responsible for collecting, maintaining and analyzing the crime data of the country.
- It is the **nodal agency for an authentic source of data on crime, accidents, suicides, and prisons for policy matters and research.**
- It is also the **apex nodal agency for all fingerprint related matters** including accreditation of Fingerprint Experts in the country.
- It, furthermore, imparts training in IT and Fingerprint Science for Indian Police Officers as well as Foreign Police officers.

Orang National Park

- The Orang National Park a**lso known as Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park is located on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in the Darrang and Sonitpur districts of Assam** and covers an area of 78.81 square kilometers.
- It was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1985 but was declared as National Park in 1999. **It is also 49th Tiger Reserve of the country**, being notified in 2016.
- It is **also known as the mini <u>Kaziranga National Park</u> (IUCN site)** since the two parks have a similar landscape made up of marshes, streams, and grasslands.
- It is the **only stronghold of rhinoceros on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river.**
- As per the latest round of Tiger estimation carried by the <u>National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)</u> between January to March 2017, **Orang's tiger density is 35.44 tigers per 100 sq km and thus can replace 'Kaziranga National Park' as a park with highest Tiger density in the country.**

- Kaziranga has the highest Tiger density of 12.72 per 100 sq km in 2014.
- **Kamlang Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh is the 50th latest Tiger Reserve that has been notified.**

Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF)

- Recently, the 50th Raising Day of CISF was celebrated.
- **Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF)**
  - It is a central armed force the Union raised under an Act of Parliament namely **Central Industrial Security Force Act, 1968.**
  - It is directly under the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs.**
  - The CISF provides **security cover to industrial units, government infrastructure projects and facilities and establishments located all over India.**
  - Industrial sectors like **atomic power plants, space installations, mines, oil fields and refineries, metro rails, major ports etc are protected by CISF.**
  - Other central armed forces in India include **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)**