

11.1.2018

CURRENT AFFAIRS

## 1. MICROBEADS

- ❑ Microbeads are manufactured solid plastic particles of less than five millimeters in their largest dimension.
- ❑ They are most frequently made of polyethylene but can be of other petrochemical plastics such as polypropylene and polystyrene.
- ❑ They are used in exfoliating personal care products, toothpastes and in biomedical and health-science research.
- ❑ Microbeads can cause plastic particle water pollution and pose an environmental hazard for aquatic animals in freshwater and ocean water.
- ❑ In the US, the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015 phases out microbeads in rinse off cosmetics by July 2017. The Netherlands was the first country to ban cosmetic microbeads in 2014.
- ❑ Microbeads are washed down the drain, can pass unfiltered through the sewage treatment plants and make their way into rivers and canals, resulting in plastic particle water pollution.
- ❑ A variety of wildlife, from small fish, amphibians and turtles to birds and larger mammals, mistake microbeads for their food source.
- ❑ This ingestion of plastics introduces the potential for toxicity not only to these animals but to other species higher in the food chain.
- ❑ Greenpeace refers to it as a “toxic time bomb”. Once in the marine environment microplastics can both release and absorb toxins, which can then move throughout the foodchain.

## 2. UIDAI INTRODUCES 2-TIER SECURITY TO SHIELD AADHAAR DATA

Aimed at eliminating the need to share and store Aadhaar numbers, the UIDAI has introduced the concept of a virtual ID which an Aadhaar holder can use in lieu of his/her Aadhaar number at the time of authentication, besides sharing of ‘limited KYC’ with certain agencies.

- ❑ A Virtual ID (VID) will be a temporary 16-digit random number mapped with the Aadhaar number. There can only be one active and valid VID for an Aadhaar number at any given time and it will not be possible to derive the Aadhaar number from VID. The VID authentication will be similar to using Aadhaar numbers. However, since a VID is temporary, agencies will not be able to use it for de-duplication. Only the Aadhaar holder will be able to generate a VID and no other entity, including authentication user agencies (AUAs), can do it on their behalf.
- ❑ The UIDAI has brought in the concept of limited KYC. It has categorised its AUAs into Global AUAs and Local AUAs wherein the latter will get access to only need based or limited KYC details. AUAs, which by law are required to use Aadhaar number in their KYCs, will be categorised as Global AUAs and have access to Full e-KYC and the ability to store Aadhaar numbers within their system.

- ❑ Once storage of Aadhaar number is restricted and since VID is temporary, agencies need a mechanism to uniquely identify their customers within their system, For this, a 72 character alphanumeric 'UID Token' will be generated for "system use". UID token allows an agency to ensure uniqueness of its beneficiaries, customers etc. without having to store Aadhaar number in their databases.

### 3. LONG-TERM EXPORT POLICY TO INCENTIVISE INVESTMENT

- ❑ The central government issued the draft National Mineral Policy (NMP), 2018, "A long term export policy for the mineral sector would provide stability and prove to be an incentive for investing in large scale commercial mining activity. To develop mining as a stand-alone industry, substantial investment is required. Assurances on export of minerals will be a key factor for investment decisions particularly on foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector. The export policy should be based on a clear long term strategy," the draft NMP stated.
- ❑ In 2016-17, the ratio of minerals produced to minerals imported in India was 1:10, according to Niti Aayog. One of the major issues ailing the Indian mining sector has been the lack of efficient transport infrastructure to send minerals from mines to ports or factories. On this topic, the draft NMP stated: "While local evacuation networks will be encouraged to be built in an integrated manner along with developing the mineral blocks, dedicated mineral corridors shall be planned to facilitate transport of minerals for mining areas in hinterland."
- ❑ "Development and installation of innovative, eco-friendly and efficient modes of evacuation like slurry pipelines and close loop conveyors shall be promoted and encouraged. An enabling environment will be cleared to allow mining companies to undertake construction of such infrastructure including construction of conventional transportation networks like rail and roads for their own usage in coordination of state/Central agencies. Use of coastal waterways and inland shipping shall also be promoted. To promote investment in the mining sector special incentives or priority movement by railways/port/coastal shipping must be encouraged," the draft NMP added.
- ❑ The policy has also focused on the issue of evacuation of minerals from small and scattered deposits, where the small scale sub-optimal mining leads to ecological disturbances. On this issue, the draft NMP stated that preferential right to any mine, which has small deposits and is situated in one of the scheduled areas, should be given to any scheduled tribe (STs) "singly or as cooperatives while extending enabling environment to carry-out mining operations in a systematic and efficient manner". The draft NMP added that where small deposits are not susceptible to viable mining, a cluster approach will be adopted by granting the deposits as a single lease within a specified geographical area.

- ❑ The Central government is also likely to grant industry status to mining sector because currently only those mining projects which have a substantial component of mining machinery, equipment and buildings are being financed by financial institutions.
- ❑ The draft NMP has also stated that all relevant acts or rules, which are related to rehabilitation and resettlement (eg. Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013), should be “strictly” implemented on ground.

#### **4.100% FDI IN SINGLE-BRAND RETAIL**

The Union Cabinet approved 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in single-brand retail and construction through the automatic route.

- ❑ The government said the move was to liberalise and simplify the FDI policy to provide ease of doing business in the country. The decision may lead to larger FDI inflows contributing to growth of investment, income, and employment.
- ❑ The existing policy on Single Brand Retail Trading (SBRT) allows 49 per cent FDI under automatic route, and FDI beyond 49 per cent and up to 100 per cent through government approval route. It has now been decided to permit 100 per cent FDI under automatic route for SBRT.
- ❑ The government notification also clarified that real estate broking services did not amount to real estate business and was, therefore, eligible for 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route. In case of power exchanges, the extant policy provides for 49 per cent FDI under automatic route for exchanges registered under the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Power Market) Regulations, 2010. However, FII/FPI purchases were restricted to secondary market only. This has now been changed and this provision has been done away with, thereby allowing FIIs/FPIs to invest in power exchanges through the primary market as well.

#### **Questions**

1. Consider the following about Microbeads

1. They are used in exfoliating personal care products, toothpastes and in biomedical and health-science research.
2. Microbeads are manufactured solid plastic particles of less than five millimeters in their largest dimension

Choose the correct statement

- A. only 1      B. only 2      C. 1 and 2      D. none

## **1. THE MAP OF RURAL DEPRIVATION-FOR MILLIONS HIT BY AGRICULTURAL DISTRESS, THE ESCAPE TO CONSTRUCTION JOBS IS GRINDING TO A HALT**

The Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) informed us that ‘landlessness and dependence on manual casual labour for a livelihood are key deprivations facing rural families’, which make them far more vulnerable to impoverishment.

### **Deprivation Parameters**

The rural census, or SECC, mapped deprivation using seven indicators:

1. ‘households with a kuchha house;
2. without an adult member in working age;
3. headed by a woman and without an adult male in working age;
4. with a disabled member and without able-bodied adult;
5. of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST);
6. without literate adults over 25 years; and
7. the landless engaged in manual labour.

The more the number of parameters on which a household is deprived, the worse its extent of poverty. Nearly 30% have two deprivations, 13% have three. Only 0.01% suffer from all seven handicaps’.

While 48.5% of all rural households suffer from at least one deprivation indicator, “landless households engaged in manual labour” are more vulnerable.

### **Factors for farmers distress:**

- Overall farm size down from the 2.25 hectares (ha) average to a 1.25 ha average in 2010, will continue to become even smaller inturn agricultural incomes are also likely to fall
- Less capacity of economy to create non-agricultural jobs for youth.

### **Construction Employment**

- The real net domestic product of the construction sector had only increased at the annual rate of 3.94% between 1970-71 and 1993-94
- Employment in the construction sector increased 13 times during the past four decades, which led to its share in rural employment rising from 1.4% in 1972-73 to 10.7% in 2011-12.
- This sector absorbed 74% of the new jobs created in non-farm sectors in rural areas between 2004-05 and 2011-12.
- Construction is the main activity absorbing poorly educated rural labour in the rural and urban areas.

- Construction jobs are growing more slowly since 2011-12, as public investment has fallen. And with the rising non-performing assets of banks, private investment has fallen as well. The result: fewer workers have been leaving agriculture since 2011-12

### **Governments Past Action:**

The Union government has sustained rural development expenditure for the last two years, especially for rural roads, under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and rural housing under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban). The Surface Transport Ministry has also attempted to sustain public investment in infrastructure to generate construction jobs for growing surplus rural labour.

The Budget for 2018-19 should sustain this public investment effort.

### **2. ON PLAYING NATIONAL ANTHEM IN CINEMA HALLS: NOT BY DIKTAT ALONE**

By making it optional for cinema halls to play the national anthem before every show, the Supreme Court has at last removed the coercive element it had unfortunately introduced by an interim order in November 2016.

This is not to suggest that symbols of national honour are undeserving of respect. Neither is it to question the idea that citizens must show due respect whenever the anthem is played or the flag is displayed.

Other Articles to Refer (The Hindu)

1. visa heartache
2. A difficult year
3. prescription for the future

Mains practice question

1. Significantly higher allocation for investment in infrastructure is vital for addressing rural distress. Comment.