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CURRENT AFFAIRS



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Fly ash

- Recently, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has decided to simultaneously hear eight ongoing cases on 'fly ash mismanagement' and accidents registered between 2013 and 2020.
- The NGT's decision is a significant acknowledgment of the 'fly ash crisis' in the country, and may usher in better regulations to govern such infrastructure.

Fly Ash Management and Utilization Campaign: The Hindu Analysis

- In order to streamline monitoring and coordination of all issues regarding management and disposal of fly ash in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the 'National Green Tribunal' (NGT) has directed the Central Government to have Secretaries of the Ministries of Environment and Coal and Chief Ministers of both the States. Directed to constitute a 'Fly Ash Management and Utilization Mission' involving Secretaries.
- The mission's mandate includes preparation of an action plan based on the findings of various committees (constituted to look into the accidents) including bridging the wide gap in storage, handling, management and utilization of fly ash.
- The mission will be financed through a CSR fund, and will also act as an environmental restoration and compensation fund responsible for relief compensation for those affected.

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'Fly ash'

- It is commonly known as 'chimney ash' or 'pulverised fuel ash'. It is a by-product of coal combustion.

Combination of Fly Ash: The Hindu Analysis

- It is made from fine particles released from coal-fired boilers.
- The constituents of fly ash vary greatly depending on the source and composition of the coal being burned in the furnaces, but silicon dioxide (SiO₂), aluminum oxide (Al₂O₃) and calcium oxide (CaO) are sufficient in all types of fly ash are present in quantity.
- Among the minor constituents of fly ash, arsenic, beryllium, boron, cadmium, chromium, hexavalent chromium, cobalt, lead, manganese, mercury, molybdenum, selenium, strontium, thallium, and vanadium are found. Particles of unburned carbon are also found in it.

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Health and environmental hazards: The Hindu Analysis

Presence of Toxic Heavy Metals:

- Nickel, cadmium, arsenic, chromium, lead, etc. found in fly ash are all toxic in nature. Their fine and toxic particles get deposited in the respiratory tract and gradually cause poisoning.

Radiation:

- Fly ash emits a hundred times more radiation than nuclear waste, given the same amount of electricity generated from nuclear plants and coal-fired thermal plants.

Water Pollution:

- Incidents of breaking of fly ash channels and the consequent scattering of ash are frequent in India, which pollute water bodies to a large extent.

Impact on Environment:

- Destruction of mangroves from ash waste from nearby coal-fired power plants, drastic reduction in crop yields, and contamination of groundwater in the Rann of Kutch have been well documented.

Uses of Fly Ash: The Hindu Analysis

- As an alternative material for concrete production, sand and Portland cement.
- Ordinary mix of fly-ash particles can be converted into concrete mix.
- Embankment construction and other structural fillers.
- Cement slag production – (as an alternative material in place of clay).
- Stabilization of soft soil.
- Road Construction.
- As brick building material.

Agricultural Use: The Hindu Analysis

- Soil Improvement, Fertilizer, Soil Stabilization.
- To melt the ice on the rivers.
- To control snow accumulation on roads and parking lots.

G20 Summit

- The Union Cabinet has started the process of setting up a Secretariat to look after the matters related to the organization of the G20 Summit to be held in the year 2023.
- India will chair this international body from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023, and the 2023 G20 summit will be held in India.

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Proposed G20 Secretariat: The Hindu Analysis

- The G20 Secretariat is being set up to handle the basic/information/material, technical, media, and security and logistics aspects of the G20 Presidency/Presidency of India.
- The Secretariat would be manned by officers and staff from the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance, and other relevant Ministries/Departments and domain information experts.
- This secretariat will remain functional till February 2024.

About G20 Group: The Hindu Analysis

- The G20 is a grouping of countries with the world's largest and fastest growing economy.
- This group controls 85 percent of the world's GDP, and represents two-thirds of the world's population.
- The G20 summit is formally known as the 'Financial Markets and Global Economy Summit'.

Establishment: The Hindu Analysis

- After the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98, it was recognized that there was a need for participation in discussions on the international financial system for major emerging economies.
- In 1999, a meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors was agreed upon by the G7 finance ministers.

Presidency: The Hindu Analysis

- The G20 Group has no permanent staff and no headquarters. The G20 grouping is chaired by the member states sequentially.
- The presiding country is responsible for organizing the next summit and for organizing smaller meetings in the coming year.
- Non-member countries can be invited as guests to the meeting of the G20 group.
- The first meeting of the G20 was held in Berlin in December 1999, after the financial crisis in East Asia affected many countries around the world.

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Full members of G20: The Hindu Analysis

- Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.

Relevance of G20 group in changing times: The Hindu Analysis

- Given the rise in globalization and the complexity of various issues, with the recent G20 summits focusing on macro economies and trade, the ones that have the greatest impact on the global economy – development, climate change and energy, health, terrorism Global issues such as antisemitism, migration and refugees are also focused.
- The G20 Group, through its contribution towards solving these global issues, has been striving to create an inclusive and sustainable world.

SEED Scheme

- **You must have often seen people playing songs or dancing in trains during one of your travels. Apart from this, you must have seen snake charmers, banjaras or madaris at all the squares or nooks.**
- **Have you ever wondered who these people are? What is their history, why are they doing such things in their life and what did us or the government do for the upliftment of their lives?**
- **Actually, during the British Government, in the year 1871, a law came which was called the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871.**
- **Due to prejudice, about 200 communities were considered 'hereditary criminals' under this law, because some of these people lived their life through looting and snatching etc. Thus these communities became victims of surveillance, imprisonment and gross discrimination.**
- **The policy makers of the time believed that crime is a genetic trait, which is automatically passed from one generation to another.**

Later, when the country became independent, an All India Criminal Tribes Investigation Committee was formed in the year 1949.

- Based on the recommendation of this committee, this law made by the British was removed in 1952. After which these came to be known as non-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.
- These people work in a variety of professions such as herding, hunting small animals, food-gathering, dancing, singing, performing acrobatics, and snake charmers and as madari etc.
- They became a nomadic life because at that time they used to change their whereabouts to avoid police-administration etc. At times, in search of livelihood, they also kept changing their residence.
- For example, when the grass of a particular area was finished grazing by the animals, the pastoral community there moved to some other place.
- Many steps were also taken by the governments from time to time after independence for their welfare, but their condition did not change much.
- In this way these people became the most neglected, marginalized and economically and socially deprived communities. They are forced to live a life of poverty for generations. Historically they never had access to private land or home ownership.
- Now the question arises that why are we suddenly talking about this community today. In fact, on 16th February, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar has launched “Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs”.
- This scheme is being called SEED in short. The main four components of this scheme launched for the welfare of these communities are –
 - To provide good quality coaching to the candidates from these communities so that they can take admission in competitive examinations like civil services, medical, engineering and MBA etc. Today Current Affairs.

- To provide health insurance to these communities through Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.
- To arrange their accommodation through the Prime Minister's Housing Scheme
- Facilitate livelihood initiatives at the community level to create and strengthen small groups of DNT/NT/SNT community institutions. Explain that DNT means Denotified Tribes, NT means Notified Tribes and SNT means Semi Notified Tribes.

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- Under this scheme, around Rs 200 crore will be spent over a period of 5 years, from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- The task of implementing the scheme ie its nodal agency has been made by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- This department has also created a portal to implement the scheme. Through this portal, beneficiaries will be able to register themselves as well as track the actual status of their application.
- Through this payment can be made to the beneficiaries directly in their account. In addition, this portal will also act as a data storage for these communities.
- It is worth noting that in the year 2015, a National Commission for Non-Notified, Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Tribes was also constituted for the welfare of this community.

Swadeep Kumar