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Five River-Linking Project: Union Budget

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech has proposed 'five river linking projects' in India.

Rivers identified for the project:

- Godavari-Krishna, Krishna-Pennar and Pennar-Cauvery, Damanganga-Pinjal and Par-Tapi-Narmada (Par-Tapi-Narmada).

Brief description of these rivers:

- **Krishna River** is the fourth largest river in India. It originates from Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra and flows through Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- **The Kaveri river** originates from 'Kodagu' and flows through Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- **The Pennar River** originates from 'Chikkaballapura' and flows through Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Godavari River** is the third largest river in India. It originates from Nashik and flows through Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa.
- **The Damanganga-Pinjal river** linking project aims at diverting surplus water from the Damanganga basin to the city to provide domestic water for the city of Mumbai.
- **Under the 'Par-Tapi-Narmada project'**, it is proposed to divert excess water from seven reservoirs located in the Western Ghats region of North Maharashtra and South Gujarat to suspected areas of Kutch and Saurashtra.

Advantages of Interlinking:

- Increase in water and food security
- Proper use of water

- Promotion of Agriculture
- Disaster Reduction
- Promotion of Transport

Related Controversies and Concerns:

- Interlinking of rivers is a very costly proposition. This will adversely affect the land, forests, biodiversity, rivers and livelihood of millions of people.
- Interlinking of rivers will lead to destruction of forests, wetlands and local water bodies. Wetlands are a major mechanism for groundwater recharge.
- Such projects cause mass displacement of people. This places a heavy burden on the government to deal with the issue of resettlement of the displaced.
- Interlinking of rivers will reduce the amount of fresh water falling into the sea and will seriously threaten marine life.

'Har Ghar, Nal Se Jal' scheme

- Under the 'Har Ghar, Nal Se Jal' scheme, Rs 60,000 crore has been allocated in the Union Budget for the year 2022-23 to cover 3.8 crore families.

'Har Ghar, Nal Se Jal' scheme:

- **Launch of the scheme:** In the year 2019.
- **Nodal Agency:** Ministry of Jal Shakti
- **Objective:** To provide piped drinking water to every rural household by 2024.
- It is a component of the flagship program of the government 'Jal Jeevan Mission'.

Implementation:

- The scheme is based on a unique model. In this, 'water committees' are formed involving the villagers, and these committees decide what the villagers will pay for the water they consume.
- The fee fixed by the water committees will not be uniform for all the residents of the village. Villagers who have bigger houses will pay more, while poor families or households with no earning member will be exempted from this fee.

Requirement:

- According to a NITI Aayog report released in 2018, 600 million Indians face acute water scarcity, and insufficient access to safe water leads to the death of nearly two lakh persons every year.

- By 2030, the country's water demand is projected to double the available supply, which means that millions of people will face severe water shortages and the country's GDP will lose about 6%.
- Studies also show that 84% of rural households do not have access to piped water and more than 70% of the country's water is contaminated.

'Jal Jeevan Mission':

- Under the 'Jal Jeevan Mission', it is envisaged to supply 55 liters of water per person per day through Functional House Tap Connections (FHTC) to all rural households by the year 2024.
- This campaign is being implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- It was launched in 2019.

Implementation:

- The 'Jal Jeevan Mission' is based on a community approach to water and includes comprehensive information, education and dialogue as a key component of the mission.
- The objective of this mission is to create a mass movement for water, through which it becomes everyone's priority.
- 90:10 for the Himalayan and North Eastern States, by the Center and the States for this mission; in the ratio of 50:50 for other states; And for the Union Territories 100% financial assistance will be provided by the Central Government.

Exports of BrahMos: Philippines

- Recently Philippines has signed an agreement with BrahMos Aerospace Pvt Ltd for supply of shore based anti-ship version of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. This is the first export order for this missile, which is a joint product of India and Russia.
- The Philippines wants to induct this missile amid tensions with China over disputed islands in the South China Sea.
- Many countries have shown interest in acquiring BrahMos missile. For example, discussions with Indonesia and Thailand are in advanced stages.

Features of BrahMos Missile:

- BrahMos is a joint venture between the Defense Research and Development Organization and NPOM of Russia.
- It is named after the Brahmaputra river of India and the Moskva river of Russia.

- It is a two-stage (solid propellant engine in the first stage and liquid ramjet in the second) missile.
- It is a multiplatform missile i.e. it can be launched with precision from land, air and sea and multi-capacity missile, which works in any weather day and night.
- It works on the principle of 'fire and forget' i.e. it does not require guidance after launch.
- BrahMos is one of the fastest cruise missiles, it currently operates with a speed of Mach 2.8, which is almost 3 times the speed of sound.
- Recently an improved version of BrahMos (extended range C-to-C variant) was tested.
- After India joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in June 2016, its range was increased to 450 km in the next phase and plans to expand to 600 kms.
- The BrahMos missile was initially fired at a range of 290 km.

Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR):

- It is an informal and voluntary partnership between 35 countries to prevent the spread of missile and unmanned aerial vehicle technology, which is capable of carrying more than 500 kg of payloads to a distance of over 300.
- Those members are prohibited from supplying missiles and UAV systems that are controlled by non-members' MTCRs.
- These decisions are taken with the consent of all the members.
- It is a non-treaty association of member states with a rules-based regulation mechanism for information sharing, national control laws and export policies for missile systems, and limiting the transfer of such critical technologies of these missile systems. There are some guidelines.
- It was established in April 1987 by the G-7 countries- USA, UK, France, Germany, Canada, Italy and Japan.

Status of India's Defense Exports:

- Defense exports are a pillar of the government's campaign to achieve self-reliance in defense production.
- More than 30 Indian defense companies have supplied arms and equipment to countries like Italy, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Russia, France, Nepal, Mauritius, Israel, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, Poland, Chile and Spain etc.

- Exports include personal protective equipment, defense electronics systems, engineering mechanical equipment, offshore patrol vessels, advanced light helicopters, avionics suites, radio systems and radar systems.
- However, India's defense exports have still not reached the expected limits.
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has ranked India 23rd in the list of major arms exporters for the year 2015-2019.
- India still exports only 0.17% of the global arms.
- The reason for India's disappointing performance in defense exports is that the Defense Ministry of India does not have any dedicated agency for exports as of now.
- The subject of export is left to individual corporations, such as 'BrahMos' or 'Defence Public Shipyard' and other undertakings.
- In this context, the KPMG report titled 'Defense Exports: Untapped Potential' recommends the first phase of setting up of a special "Defense Export Help Desk".
- The report states that based on the inputs received from the help-desk, Indian companies can work with government machinery for exports.
- If India succeeds in providing a large military system to neighboring countries, it will not only boost defense exports, but will also be a strategic move to counter the influence of China, as it is in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Provides defense products to many countries in Asia.

Winter Olympics

- The Russian President, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and five Presidents from Central Asia will reach China for the inauguration of the Winter Olympics.

Importance of Travel:

- The Russian President will discuss the ongoing crisis with Ukraine with the Chinese President.
- China has close ties with Russia, but is largely silent on the Russia-Ukraine crisis.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) plan is expected to accelerate with the Prime Minister of Pakistan discussing investments with China.
- China has also announced that it wants to discuss the development of communication satellites for Pakistan and cooperate in the construction of the Pakistan Space Center.

- The US, UK, Canada and Australia have announced a “diplomatic boycott” of the Games in China’s Xinjiang province due to alleged human rights violations.

Winter Olympics:

- The Winter Olympics is the main event of those sports which are played on ice.
- It is held every four years and is attended by participants from all over the world.
- Ice skating, ice hockey, skiing and figure skating are some of the popular sports played in winter sports.
- The first Winter Olympics were held in Chamonix, France in the year 1924.
- The Winter Games were initially played only during the Summer Olympics, the 1908 London Olympics hosted four skating events, and the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp included skating as well as ice hockey.
- However, in the year 1924, a separate program for winter sports was started, which is called ‘International Winter Sports Week’.
- It was held in Chamonix, France, the host country of the 1924 Summer Olympics.
- Two years later, ‘International Winter Sports Week’ in Chamonix was officially recognized as the first Winter Olympic Games.
- This year’s edition of the Winter Olympic Games will be held in Beijing, China from February 4 to February 20, 2022.
- India is participating in the Winter Olympics since 1964.

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