1. Cabinet approves India to Join International Energy Efficiency Hub

Background

The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of 'Letter of Intent' thus enabling India to join the 'Energy Efficiency Hub'.

India will join the International Energy Efficiency Hub (Hub), a global platform dedicated to fostering collaboration and promoting energy efficiency worldwide. This move solidifies India's commitment to sustainable development and aligns with its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Bharat joins the Energy Efficiency Hub under IEA

✓ Bharat will join the "Energy Efficiency Hub" (under International Energy Agency)

✓ Existing members include: United States, United Kingdom, China, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia

✓ Objectives of the Energy efficiency Hub:
  • Foster collaboration and enhance global energy efficiency efforts.
  • Facilitate knowledge sharing between countries, international organisations and private sector.
  • Increase visibility of energy efficiency issues on the global stage.

✓ Bureau of Energy Efficiency will be the implementing agency for the Hub

International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation

Established in 2020 as the successor to the International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation (IPEEC), in which India was a member, the Hub brings together governments, international organizations, and private sector entities to share knowledge, best practices, and innovative solutions. By joining the Hub, India will gain access to a vast network of experts and

resources, enabling it to enhance its domestic energy efficiency initiatives. As of July, 2024, sixteen countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Russia, Saudi Arabia, United States and United Kingdom) have joined the Hub.

India's membership

As a member of the Hub, India will benefit from opportunities for collaboration with other member states, sharing its own expertise and learning from international best practices. The country will also contribute to global efforts to address climate change by promoting energy-efficient technologies and practices.

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), the statutory agency, has been designated as the implementing agency for the Hub on behalf of India. BEE will play a crucial role in facilitating India's participation in the Hub's activities and ensuring that India's contributions align with its national energy efficiency goals.

By joining the Hub, India is taking a significant step towards more sustainable future. The country's participation in this global platform will help to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy and improve energy security.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Organisations
Source: PIB

2. Cabinet approves the PM Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY) to promote sustainable agriculture and Krishonnati Yojana (KY) to achieve food security for self sufficiency

Rationalisation of Schemes

The Union Cabinet approved the proposal of the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) for rationalization of all Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) operating under Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's into two-umbrella Schemes viz. Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY), a cafeteria scheme and Krishonnati Yojana (KY). PM-RKVY will promote sustainable agriculture, while KY will address food security & agricultural self-sufficiency. All components shall leverage technology to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the various components.

The PM Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY) and Krishonnati Yojana (KY) will be implemented with total proposed expenditure of Rs.1,01,321.61 crore. These Schemes are implemented through the State Governments.

This exercise ensures that all the existing schemes are being continued. Wherever it was considered necessary to give fillip to any area for farmer's welfare, the scheme has been taken up in Mission mode, for example National Mission for Edible Oil-Oil Palm [NMEO-OP], Clean Plant Program, Digital Agriculture & National Mission for Edible Oil-Oil Seeds [NMEO-OS].

The scheme Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER), a component under the KY, is being modified by adding an additional

component namely MOVCDNER- Detailed Project Report (MOVCDNER-DPR), which will provide flexibility to the North Eastern states to address critical challenges.

Purpose behind rationalisation

By rationalization of the schemes, the States are given an opportunity to prepare a Comprehensive Strategic Document on Agriculture Sector of the State in a holistic manner. The Strategic Document focuses not only the production and productivity of the crops but also tackles the emerging issues of Climate Resilient Agriculture and development of Value Chain approach for agricultural commodities. These plans are envisaged to articulate the overall strategy and the schemes/programs, linked with the objectives flowing from the strategic framework.

The rationalisation of Various Schemes has been undertaken to:
• To avoid duplication, ensure convergence and provide flexibility to States.
• Focus on emergent challenges of Agriculture - Nutrition security, Sustainability, Climate resilience, value chain development & private sector participation.
• State governments will be able to draw a comprehensive strategic plan suiting their requirements for agriculture sector.
• Annual Action Plan (AAP) of States can be approved in one go rather approving individual scheme-wise AAPs.

One important change is to provide, in PM-RKVY, the state governments be given flexibility to re-allocate funds from one component to other based on their state specific requirements.

Out of the total proposed expenditure of Rs.1,01,321.61 crore the projected expenditure towards central share of DA&FW is Rs.69,088.98 crore and states share is Rs.32,232.63 crore. This includes Rs.57,074.72 crore for RKVY and Rs.44,246.89 crore for KY.

The PM-RKVY comprises of the following schemes:
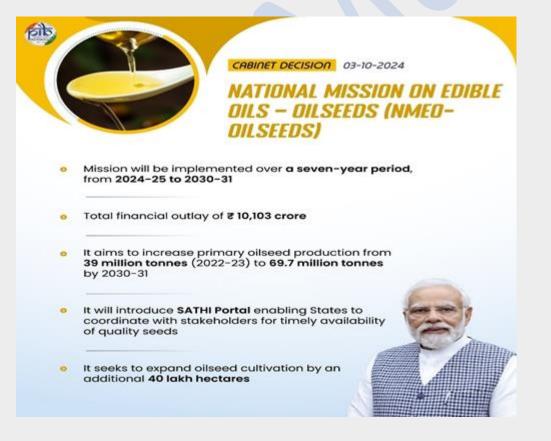1. Soil Health Management

2. Rainfed Area Development
3. Agro Forestry
4. Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana
5. Agricultural Mechanization including Crop Residue Management
6. Per Drop More Crop
7. Crop Diversification Programme
8. RKVY DPR component
9. Accelerator Fund for Agri Startups

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance
Source: PIB

3. Cabinet Approves National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds)

Introduction
The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds). This initiative aims to boost domestic oilseed production and reduce dependence on edible oil imports, advancing the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). The mission will run from 2024-25 to 2030-31, with a financial outlay of Rs 10,103 crore.

Key Objectives
• **Increase Oilseed Production:** The mission focuses on increasing the production of primary oilseed crops such as Rapeseed-Mustard, Groundnut, Soybean, Sunflower, and Sesamum. It also aims to improve oil extraction from secondary sources like Cottonseed, Rice Bran, and Tree-Borne Oils.

• **Production Targets:** By 2030-31, primary oilseed production is targeted to rise from 39 million tonnes (2022-23) to 69.7 million tonnes. Along with the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), the goal is to produce 25.45 million tonnes of edible oil domestically, meeting about 72% of projected demand.

Strategies for Implementation

1. Adoption of Advanced Technologies: The mission will promote the use of high-yielding, high oil content seed varieties and cutting-edge global technologies like genome editing to boost productivity.

2. Seed Infrastructure and Availability: An Online 5-year rolling seed plan will be introduced through the SATHI Portal to ensure timely access to quality seeds. 65 new seed hubs and 50 seed storage units will be established to improve seed production.

3. Value Chain Clusters: Over 600 Value Chain Clusters will be set up in 347 districts, covering more than 10 lakh hectares annually. Farmers in these clusters will receive access to high-quality seeds, training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), and advisory services.

4. Expansion of Cultivation Areas: The mission will expand oilseed cultivation by 40 lakh hectares, targeting fallow lands in rice and potato-growing areas, and encouraging intercropping and crop diversification.

5. Support for Post-Harvest Units: Financial support will be extended to Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), cooperatives, and industry players to establish or upgrade post-harvest units, improving oil extraction from sources like cottonseed, rice bran, and Tree-Borne Oils (TBOs).

Public Awareness and Environmental Benefits

The mission will launch an Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign to promote awareness of dietary guidelines for edible oils. It will also generate environmental benefits through low water usage and improved soil health by making productive use of crop fallow areas.

Background

India currently imports 57% of its edible oil demand. The government has been taking steps to reduce this reliance, including launching the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) in 2021, with an outlay of Rs 11,040 crore, to boost oil palm cultivation.

Additionally, the government has increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for oilseeds, ensuring fair prices for farmers, and imposed a 20% import duty on edible oils to protect domestic producers.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance
Source: PIB

4. Which are India's 5 new 'classical languages', what does the tag mean?

Introduction

The Union Cabinet extended the "classical language" tag to Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali. Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia already enjoy this status.

When and how did the concept of "classical language" arise?

Following demands from various states, the UPA-1 government decided to create a category of Indian languages known as "classical languages", and lay down various criteria for this status.

On October 12, 2004, Tamil became the first Indian language to receive "classical" status due to its high antiquity and rich literary tradition.

In the following month, the Ministry of Culture set up a Linguistic Experts Committee (LEC) under the Sahitya Akademi to examine proposals for "classical language" status from various states and bodies.

On November 25, Sanskrit was declared a classical language. Subsequently, this status was conferred upon Telugu (2008), Kannada (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).

Cabinet approves conferring status of Classical Language to 5 more languages

5 more Classical languages

- Linguistic Experts Committee: criteria for "Classical language"
    (i)   High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years
    (ii) A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a heritage by generations of speakers
    (iii) Knowledge texts, especially prose texts in addition to poetry, epigraphical and inscriptional evidence
    (iv) The classical languages and literature could be distinct from its current form or could be discontinuous with its later forms of its offshoots

5 more Classical languages: Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali

In addition to already notified: Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia

What are the latest criteria for "classical languages"?

On July 25 this year, the LEC unanimously revised the criteria for classical status. The criteria now includes:
• High antiquity of early texts, and recorded history over a period of 1500- 2000 years;
• A body of ancient literature/ texts, which is considered a heritage by generations of speakers;
• Epigraphic and inscriptional evidence;

• Knowledge texts, especially prose texts in addition to poetry; and
• That classical languages and literature could be distinct from its current form or could be discontinuous with later forms of its offshoots.
• Following this, the committee recommended the addition of the five new classical languages, the proposals for which had been with the Centre for some years. This was approved by the Union Cabinet recently.

What is behind the recent additions?
Marathi: With the state Assembly elections just weeks away, the inclusion of Marathi comes over a decade after the state government first forwarded the proposal to the Centre in 2013.

Modern Marathi descends from Maharashtri Prakrit, a Prakrit dialect used in western India which was the official language of the Satvahanas. Some Marathi scholars have claimed that this was the first among Prakrit languages, but this claim is contested. The oldest evidence of Maharashtri Prakrit can be found in a stone inscription in Pune district, dated to the 1st century BCE. The earliest evidence of the more modern Marathi can be traced to a copper-plate inscription found in Satara, dated to 739 CE.

Bengali & Assamese: The West Bengal and Assam state governments had also sought "classical" status for their respective languages.

Both these languages can find their origin in Magadhi Prakrit, a form of Prakrit popular in East India, and the official language of the Magadha court. The exact date in which they emerged is contested, with scholars putting forward dates of origin ranging from the 6th to the 12th centuries. They took on a form which may be recognisable today well into the second millennium CE. The legendary linguist Suniti Kumar Chatterji suggested that the Indo-Aryan vernacular likely differentiated itself in Assam before Bengal.

Prakrit & Pali: There is no single Prakrit language. Rather, the term refers to a group of closely-related Indo-Aryan languages, whose defining feature was that they were the language of the masses as opposed to Sanskrit, which was restricted to the elites and high literature. Historian A L Basham wrote in The Wonder that was India (1954): "By the time of the Buddha the masses were speaking languages which were much simpler than Sanskrit. These were the Prakrits, of which several dialects have been attested."

These vernaculars were thus also the language of popular heterodox religions that emerged in the first millennium BCE.

Jain agamas and the Gatha Saptashati are in Ardhamagadhi, a Prakrit dialect which some scholars consider to be its definitive form. This Prakrit thus continues to have resonance among the Jain community, and still sees use in the religion's ritual practices.

Pali, likely a form of somewhat Sanskritised Magadhi Prakrit, was the language of the Theravada Buddhist Canon — the Tipitakas. Considered to be the language of the Buddha himself, Pali survived in places like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, where the Theravada school prospered.

What will the 'classical' tag mean for these languages?

Officials say that the broader cultural and academic impact of this designation will extend nationally and internationally.

The Ministry of Education takes steps to promote classical languages. Three Central Universities were established in 2020 for the promotion of Sanskrit. The Central Institute of Classical Tamil was set up in 2008 to facilitate the translation of ancient Tamil texts, and offer courses in Tamil. Similar Centres of Excellence have also been set up for the study of Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia.

Officials told The Indian Express that the newly added classical languages will be promoted in a similar fashion.

The National Education Policy also calls for the inclusion of classical languages in school education. The Ministry of Culture (through the various academies), the Ministry of Education, and respective state governments, will come together for greater knowledge-sharing and research in these languages. Besides, manuscripts in these languages will be digitised for greater access to scholars, the officials said.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Culture
Source: Indian Express