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Conservation initiatives in the Budget

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Why is in news? In recent budget speech Finance Minister introduced schemes and policies aimed at ecological conservation. Targeting an array of different issues, these schemes come with the promise of preserving India's ecological health. This is part of a larger "green push" with focus on the environment and climate change.

Major Schemes and its Significance

MISHTI

About the Scheme

MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes) is a new programme that will facilitate mangrove plantation along India's coastline and on salt pan lands.

The programme will operate through "convergence between MGNREGS, Campa Fund and other sources

This new programme will aim at intensive afforestation of coastal mangrove forests. India has such forests on both its Eastern and Western coasts with the Sundarbans in Bengal being one of the largest mangrove forests on the planet

Significance:

Mangroves are not just some of the most bio-diverse locations in India, they also protect the coastlines from the vagaries of inclement weather.

As climate change increases the incidence of extreme weather events across the world, mangrove plantations have shown to make coastal lands resilient, preventing flooding, land erosion and acting as a buffer for cyclones.

Furthermore, they are also excellent carbon sinks. Mangrove trees can grow in saline waters, and can sequester up to four times more carbon than tropical rainforests.

PM PRANAM

About the Scheme

PM PRANAM (Prime Minister Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth) programme will seek to incentivise states and union territories promoting alternative fertilisers and the balanced use of chemical fertilisers.

The government had already planned to introduce a new scheme to reduce the use of chemical fertilisers in the country.

Significance

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The scheme aims to reduce the subsidy burden on chemical fertilisers, expected to increase by 39% to Rs.2.25 lakh crore in 2022-2023 compared to Rs.1.62 lakh crore in the previous year.

It aims to discourage chemical fertiliser usage and promote sustainable agriculture practices.

Reduced use of chemical fertilisers may improve soil quality in the long run. It will enhance the yield and productivity of Indian agriculture.

Excessive exposure to chemical fertilisers affects human health through cancers and diseases caused due to DNA damage. It would promote a safe work environment.

Bhartiya Prakritik Kheti Bio-Input Resource Centres

About the Scheme

To further facilitate the adoption of “natural farming,” 10,000 Bio-Input Resource Centres will be set-up, creating a national-level distributed micro-fertiliser and pesticide manufacturing network.

This will impact over 1 crore farmers over the next three years

Significance:

The Scheme address the following concerns associated with the chemical fertilizers

Chemical fertilisers revolutionised agriculture when they were introduced, more than half a century ago. However, they also pose multiple risks that are increasingly being understood by scientists.

They are known to be a major source of water pollution – impacting both groundwater and rivers, ponds and lakes.

Eutrophication caused by excessive use of chemical fertilisers is a death knell for fishes and other aquatic life, often covering lakes and ponds with a thick layer of algae and reducing the oxygen content in the water.

Over a long period of time, they can also harm the soil, causing acidification, and hence have an impact on the land’s productivity. Lastly, studies have found a link between the excessive use of chemical fertilisers and incidence of cancer among farmers

Amrit Dharohar

About the Scheme

This is a scheme that will be implemented over the next three years to encourage optimal use of wetlands, and enhance bio-diversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.

Amrit Dharohar will emphasise on the importance of wetlands and their preservation, with an outlook that is inclusive of local communities as caretakers of the ecosystem.

Significance:

The government had previously identified the importance of wetland ecosystems

Now the total number of Ramsar sites in our country has increased to 75. Whereas, before 2014, there were only 26.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance that have been designated under the criteria of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971) for containing representative, rare or unique wetland types or for their importance

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in conserving biological diversity.

These sites sustain a diverse variety of flora and fauna, from endangered aquatic life to migratory birds.

India's 75 Ramsar sites are spread across the country, covering 1326678 hectares,

As many as 49 new sites have been added to the list since 2019, with 19 being added in 2022.

GREEN GROWTH

MOVING FORWARD TO ACHIEVE THE CLIMATE GOALS

- **Green Credit Programme** to be launched to incentivize sustainable actions
- **PM-PRANAM*** to be launched to incentivize States/UTs to promote alternative fertilizers
- 500 new 'Waste to Wealth' plants to be established under **GOBARDHAN Scheme**
- **MISHTI^** to be taken up for Mangrove plantation along coastline
- **Amrit Dharohar** to be implemented over next 3 years for optimal usage of wetlands

* PRANAM: PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth
^ MISHTI: Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes

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