



News Analysis (24 Sep, 2019)

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Climate Action Summit

At the **74th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly**, the Prime Minister of India addressed the United Nations (UN) Climate Action Summit as well as the Universal Health Coverage meeting, held in New York on 23rd September, 2019.

Climate Action Summit

- It was hosted by the UN Secretary.
- It had the key focus on raising ambition and accelerate action to implement the **Paris Agreement**.

Key Takeaways

- **Renewable Energy:** India will **increase** renewable energy capacity to **beyond 175 GW** (capacity as committed under the Paris Climate Agreement) **by 2022**.
- **Water Conservation:** Spend approximately \$50 billion in the next few years on the **Jal Jeevan Mission** to conserve water, harvest rainwater and develop water resources.
- **International Solar Alliance:** Almost 80 countries have joined this India led initiative.
- **Two International Initiatives:**
 - **Leadership Group:** India and Sweden together with other countries have announced a new '**Leadership Group for Industry Transition**' that will drive transformation in hard-to-decarbonize and energy-intensive sectors.
 - **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI):** An international partnership that will support countries- developed and developing- to build **climate and disaster resilient infrastructure**.
 - The Coalition's **secretariat, based in Delhi**, will facilitate knowledge exchange, provide technical support and support capacity building.
 - The Government of India, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and partners have together worked on the CDRI initiative in response to the Prime Minister of India's call for action to reduce damage to critical infrastructure at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2016.

High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage

The Prime Minister of India, while addressing the **first-ever high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage**, underscored that 'a healthy life is the right of every person'. He also outlined the **four main pillars** of healthcare that India focuses on:

- **Preventive Healthcare:** India has laid special emphasis on **yoga, ayurveda and fitness** which has helped in controlling lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, blood pressure and depression.
 - **Fit India Movement** has been launched recently.
 - The Clean India Campaign has contributed towards saving millions of lives.
 - **Immunization:** Apart from introducing new vaccines, the government has improved access to vaccination in far flung areas.
- **Affordable Healthcare:** For this the government has rolled out the world's largest health insurance scheme : **Ayushman Bharat**.
 - Under this scheme, 500 million poor people have been given the facility of free treatment worth up to Rs. 500,000 every year. In 2018, 4.5 million people availed of this facility.
 - India has opened more than 5000 special pharmacies where more than 800 varieties of vital medicines are available at affordable prices.
 - The cost of stents for heart patients has been slashed by 80% and the cost of knee implants has been cut down by 50 - 70%.
 - Kidney patients in India are also taking advantage of the free dialysis services provided by the government
 - India has also helped in providing access to affordable healthcare by way of **telemedicine to several other countries**, especially African countries.
- **Supply Side Intervention:** India's focus has been on establishment of modern institutions for quality medical education.
- **Mission Mode Intervention:** In order to improve the health of women and children, a **National Nutrition Campaign** and other new programmes have been launched in mission mode.
Also, India has commitment to **eliminate Tuberculosis by 2025**, five years ahead of the global goal of 2030.

Note: At the meeting, the world leaders adopted a high-level **United Nations Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**, to be achieved by 2030.

- Universal health coverage means that all people have access to the health care they need, when and where they need it, without facing financial hardship.
- The declaration is said to be the most comprehensive set of health commitments ever adopted.
- Countries, including India, made a financial and political commitment to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage by scaling up essential health services, affording financial risk protection and ensuring access to safe, quality, effective and affordable medicines and vaccines for all.

Source: PIB

'UMMID' Initiative

Recently, the Government of India has launched **UMMID (Unique Methods of Management and Treatment of Inherited Disorders)** initiative to tackle inherited genetic diseases of newborn babies.

- The programme will be implemented through **government hospitals** to regularise the use of cutting edge **scientific technology and molecular medicine** to achieve Universal Health Coverage for all.
- The initiative is designed on the concept of '**Prevention is better than Cure**'.
- In India's urban areas, congenital malformations and genetic disorders are the **third most common cause of mortality after** prematurity & low birth weight issues and infections in newborns.
- A very large population and high birth rate, and consanguineous marriage favoured in many communities are some of the important reasons for the high prevalence of genetic disorders in India.
- **The UMMID initiative aims:**
 - To establish **NIDAN (National Inherited Diseases Administration) Kendras** to provide counselling, prenatal testing and diagnosis, management, and multidisciplinary care in Government Hospitals wherein the influx of patients is more.
 - To produce **skilled clinicians in Human Genetics,**
 - To undertake **screening of pregnant women and newborn babies** for inherited genetic diseases in hospitals at **aspirational districts.**
 - To create awareness about genetic disorders amongst clinicians and to establish molecular diagnostics in hospitals.

The three components of UMMID Initiative

Fellowship in Genetic Diagnostics: Hands-on training for six months will be provided to doctors working in government hospitals by eight departments with state-of-the-art DNA-based diagnostic services for genetic disorders. Each centre will train 4 fellows per year thus providing 96 trained doctors in genetic diagnostics during the period of 3 years.

NIDAN Kendras [Diagnostic Centres]: Hospitals with interested doctors, committed administrators and basic infrastructure have been selected and have been funded to establish genetic laboratories. The centres selected have medical doctors with expertise in medical genetics and passion for the specialty. The financial support and twinning with established Medical Genetics centres will help them to develop state-of-the-art facilities in molecular diagnostics.

Prevention of Genetic Disorders in Aspirational Districts: Each of the 7 centres providing genetic training have adopted one aspirational district and will establish a program for prevention of genetic disorders including beta thalassemia and newborn screening for treatable disorders. This will be a prototype of an outreach program which will take latest genetic diagnostics to the population and lead the way to incorporate genetic services in maternal & child care. This will provide onsite training to the doctors in these district hospitals in addition to creating awareness about genetic disorders amongst the general population.

UMMID initiative shall work to shift focus from "**sick-care**" to "**wellness**" by promoting the **prevention** of genetic diseases.

Inherited Genetic Diseases

- A genetic disorder is a disease caused in whole or in part by a change in the DNA sequence away from the normal sequence.
- Genetic disorders can be caused by a mutation in one gene (monogenic disorder), by mutations in multiple genes (multifactorial inheritance disorder), by a combination of gene mutations or by damage to chromosomes.
- Some of the examples of Genetic disorders are: Sickle Cell Anemia, Heart Disease, High Blood Pressure, Alzheimer's Disease, Diabetes, Cancer, and Obesity.

Source: PIB

National Conclave on Energy Efficiency

Recently, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) organized a National conclave on energy efficiency in the **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** sector.

MSME entrepreneurs along with the industry associations, technology and service providers, and sectoral energy experts participated in the conclave.

Key Highlights

- The conclave aimed at finding out new **sustainable and green initiatives** that can help MSMEs to achieve higher growth keeping in view the key issues like technical and financial capabilities of MSMEs, capacity building, and awareness programmes.
- During the inaugural session, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the development commissioner of MSME and the director-general of the BEE to develop a long-term road map for **enhancing energy efficiency and security needs** for the MSME sector through a focused intervention.
- At the event, a **knowledge management portal** named **SIDHIEE** was also launched.
The portal aims to provide useful information (including tutorial videos) for **early adoption** of energy-efficient technologies by the MSMEs.
- According to the proposed new **Power tariff policy**, the emphasis will be laid upon making electricity prices rational for the MSMEs and reducing the burden of cross-subsidies for them. It can **reduce the MSMEs' power bills** making them more **competitive** in the international market.
- Following the best practices and efficient energy initiatives will be helpful in reducing the nation's energy demands and strengthening its energy security needs.

Power Tariff Policy

- The proposed amendments to the National tariff policy of 2016, focus upon the provisions related to Generation, Transmission, and Distribution of electricity.
- The target is to provide 24x7 **uninterrupted power supply** at affordable rates to all consumers, improve efficiency in the tariff design-related issues including simplification of tariff categories, rationalization of retail tariffs, removing barriers like cross-subsidy surcharges and undesirable duties on open access sales for the industrial and other bulk power consumers.

This uninterrupted power supply to MSMEs and industries will enhance their efficiency and keep them running for longer durations.

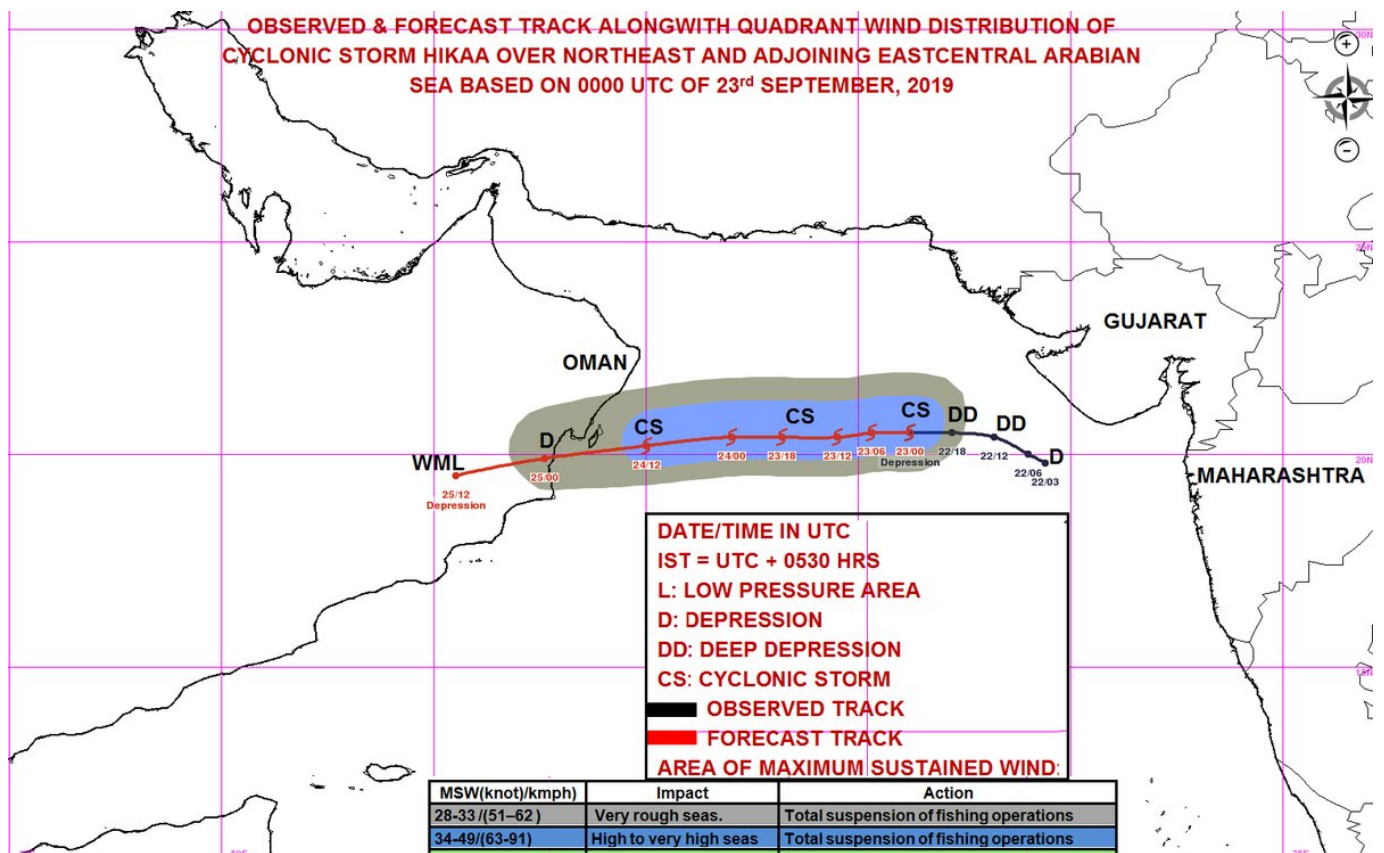
Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

- The **BEE is a statutory body** under the **Ministry of Power, Government of India**.
- It assists in **developing policies and strategies with the primary objective of reducing the energy intensity** of the Indian economy.
- BEE coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies, and other organizations to identify and utilize the existing resources and infrastructure, in performing the functions assigned to it under the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.

Source: PIB

Cyclonic Storm 'HIKAA'

A deep depression over the **Arabian Sea** has intensified into cyclonic storm 'Hikka' that will cause **strong winds** along the **Gujarat coast**.



- The Cyclone is found over the region near about 490 km west-southwest of Veraval (Gujarat), 520 km south-southwest of Karachi (Pakistan) and 710 km east-southeast of Masirah (Oman).
- Hikka is **likely to hit the Oman coast, south of Masirah**, close to Duqm, which is a port and a refinery.
- The **name Hikka** has been **given** by the **Maldives**.
- Hikka is moving at a speed of 10 kmph packing wind speed of 90 kmph.

- The warm sea-surface temperatures of 29 to 30-degree celsius (**the threshold limit is 27.5-degree celsius**) will **aid the convection** (the process of cloud-building), favouring the system **strength in the short term**.
- But the prospect of **penetration of dry air from the hot Arabian peninsula** may act **against** the **process of cloud building** which might reduce the strength of the cyclone.
- **India Meteorological Department** has predicted '**Light to Moderate rainfall in many places**' and '**Heavy Rainfall in isolated places**' in coastal districts of **Saurashtra and Kutch** due to the possible formation of a deep depression over east-central and North-East the Arabian Sea off Gujarat coast.
- In coastal areas of Gujarat, the sea state expected to remain **“rough to very rough”** for the next few hours.

Arabian Sea Cyclones

- Cyclonic activity is comparatively **less intense in the Arabian sea, as compared to the Bay of Bengal**, where high-intensity severe cyclones originate frequently.
- In the last 120 years, just about 14% of all cyclonic storms, and 23% of severe cyclones, around India have occurred in the Arabian Sea.
- Arabian Sea cyclones are also relatively weak compared to those emerging in the Bay of Bengal.
- Gujarat coastline, where most of the cyclones emerging in the Arabian Sea are headed, is not very densely populated, ensures that the damage potential of the cyclones on the western coast is comparatively low.

Tropical Cyclone

- Cyclone is the formation of a **very low-pressure system with very high-speed winds** revolving around it. Factors like wind speed, wind direction, temperature and humidity contribute to the development of cyclones.
- Before cloud formation, water takes up heat from the atmosphere to change into a vapour. When water vapour changes back to liquid form as raindrops, this heat is released to the atmosphere.
- The heat released to the atmosphere warms the air around. The air tends to rise and causes a drop in pressure. More air rushes to the centre of the storm. This cycle is repeated.
- Since Hurricanes derive their energy from heated seawater which can be prevented by the presence of upper-level-winds that disrupt the storm circulation forcing it to lose its strength.

Source:PIB

Black Carbon Particles Affecting Unborn Babies

According to a study published in 'Nature Communications', the black carbon particles emitted by the vehicular exhaust and coal-fired power plants, have been detected on the fetus-facing side of the placenta, which possibly is expected to affect the overall development of the unborn baby.

Key Findings

- **90% of the world's population** lives in places where air pollution is above the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.

- The concentration of black carbon particles was **highest in the placentas of women who are most exposed to airborne pollutants** in their daily life.
- Inhalation of these particles by the mother gets **translocated from the mothers' lungs to the placenta**, resulting in life-long changes to the development of the baby along with permanently damaging the lung tissues.
- The link between exposure to dirty air and increased cases of miscarriages, premature births, and low birth weights which in turn increases the chances for **diabetes, asthma, stroke, heart disease** and a lot of other conditions, has been established in this study.

This opens future avenues for new fields of research that demand focused attention on the direct role of particles getting to the tissues, rather than particles getting into the lungs.

- A comprehensive global review also concluded that the air pollution may be damaging every organ and virtually every cell in the human body. Nanoparticles have been found crossing the blood-brain barrier in humans.

Way Forward

- According to the WHO standards, the black carbon particles in the air are not considered as a major pollutant. The need is to identify and aptly list all possible pollutants affecting crucial stages of the development.
- The nascent stage of development is the most vulnerable period of life. All the organ systems are in the phases of development. For the protection of future generations, we have to reduce the exposure to such pollutants.

Black Carbon Particles

- Black carbon is a **short-lived** climate pollutant with a lifetime of only a few days to weeks after release in the atmosphere.
- Black carbon particle is a **potent climate-warming component** of particulate matter formed by the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, wood, and other fuels.
 - Incomplete combustion releases CO₂, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, and organic carbon and black carbon particles in the atmosphere.
- Black carbon and its co-pollutants are key components of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) air pollution that is one of the leading environmental causes of **poor health and premature deaths**.

Source: TOI

Special Expenditure Observers

Recently, the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has appointed two **Special Expenditure Observers** for the forthcoming elections to the Legislative Assembly of Maharashtra.

- The Special Expenditure Observers are appointed in the exercise of the powers conferred on ECI under **Article 324 of the Constitution** and **the Representation of the People Act, 1951**.
- The Functions of the Special Expenditure Observers include:
 - To watch the conduct of Elections with special emphasis on controlling the abuse of money power, in consultation with the Chief Electoral Officer at respective constituencies.

- To supervise and to monitor the work being done by the electoral machinery
- To ensure stringent and effective enforcement action is undertaken based on intelligence inputs and complaints received through **C-VIGIL** and Voter Helpline.

Source: PIB
