



Municipal Bonds

Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper II and III
- ✓ Polity and governance, Municipal funds, Municipal Bonds

Recently:

- ❖ The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has launched a scheme to incentivise Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) covered under the AMRUT mission to issue municipal bonds.
- ❖ Aims of the Mission:
- ❖ The mission aims to provide basic services (such as water supply, sewerage, and urban transport) in 500 cities.

Regulation over Municipal Bonds:

- Municipal bonds are marketable debt instruments issued by ulbs.
- The funds raised through them may be used for: (i) capital projects, (ii) refinancing of existing loans, and (iii) meeting working capital requirements.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India regulations (2015) regarding municipal bonds provide that, to issue such bonds, municipalities must fulfil certain criteria related to fiscal performance:
- Not have negative net worth in any of the three preceding financial years, and
- Not have defaulted in any loan repayments in the last one year.

How will the money be raised through bonds?

- In order to incentivise ULBs to raise their own resources through issuance of municipal bonds, the Ministry will provide Rs 13 crore for every Rs 100 crore of bonds issued.
- Bonds issued up to Rs 200 crore will be eligible for the incentive amount provided by the Ministry.
- The Ministry will incentivise ten ULBs on a first come first serve basis.
- ULBs that issued bonds during 2017-18 will also be eligible to claim the incentive amount under the scheme.



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Pheromones in Pest Management

Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper I, III
- ✓ Sci-tech, Agriculture, Pest management, Oilseeds, Pheromones

Recently:

- ❖ Recent studies have demonstrated potential of pheromones as a tool for monitoring pest populations and integrated pest management.

What are Pheromones?

- A pheromone is a chemical that an animal produces which changes the behavior of another animal of the same species.
- Pheromones are similar to hormones but work outside of the body.
- They induce activity in other individuals, such as sexual arousal.
- Most insects use pheromones to communicate.
- Some chemicals have been investigated for pheromone actions in humans but evidence is weak.

Types of Pheromones:

- Sex pheromones: used for mate location and courtship.
- Aggregation pheromones: cause insects of both sexes to crowd around the source of the pheromone for feeding or reproduction. This may benefit increased chances of mating, security from predation and maximum utilization of scarce food resources.
- Alarm pheromone: causes alarm behavior serve to rapidly disperse a group of insects usually as a response to predation.
- Trail pheromones: insects mark their trails to food and the nests.
- Host marking pheromones: reduce the competition between members of the same species, like it is observed in parasitoids that mark a host in which they have laid an egg.

Pheromones in Management of Insect Pests of Oilseed Crops

- In India, oilseeds follow cereals, sharing 14% of the country's gross cropped area and accounting for nearly 3% of the gross domestic product and about 6% of the value of all agricultural products.
- The productivity of oilseed crops is low in India as compared to world and vulnerability of these oilseed crops to insect pests is one of the main factors.
- Pheromones have been successfully used in pest management through mass trapping and mating disruption techniques.
- Large number of pheromone baited traps can be used in the fields to capture males of newly emerged moths and reduce the number of males for mating.



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REPORT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelim, GS Mains paper III and IV
- ✓ Sci-tech, Artificial Intelligence, Ethics in Science, Report of task force on Artificial Intelligence

Recently:

- ❖ The Task Force on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Chaired by Dr. V. Kamakoti constituted under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, submitted its report.

Background:

- The Task Force was constituted in August, 2017. The terms of reference of the Task Force included:
- Identifying areas of application for AI technology and make recommendations for faster adoption of AI in private and public areas,
- Deliberate and suggest ways to address concerns regarding AI such as data privacy and employability, and
- Make recommendations regarding policy and legal framework to enable use of AI.

Key recommendations of the Task Force include:

- National Artificial Intelligence Mission:
 - An Inter Ministerial National Artificial Intelligence Mission must be funded with an allocation of Rs 1,200 crore for a period of five years.
 - The Mission will include:
- Establishment and seed funding of six centres of excellence,
- Setting up of a generic AI test bed which can be a validation platform for AI based technology developers, and
- Creation of an interdisciplinary large data centre to aggregate and interpret data.
- Digital data banks:
 - Digital data banks, marketplaces and exchanges should be set up to ensure availability data across industries, with requisite sharing regulations.
- Standard setting:
 - Standards required for the design, development and deployment of AI based systems must be developed by the central government. For example, data storage and privacy standards, and communication standards for autonomous systems such as cars.
- Enabling policies:
 - Policies to encourage, develop and deploy AI based products need to be developed by the central government. Two major recommendations in this regard are:
- Developing a data policy including ownership, sharing rights, and usage policies,
- Providing tax incentives for income generated due to the adoption of ai technologies and applications for socially relevant projects.



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Swadhar Greh Scheme

Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper I, II, IV
- ✓ Schemes of government, women empowerment, women related schemes, Swadhar Greh Scheme

Introduction:

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the Swadhar Greh Scheme which targets the women victims of difficult circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity.
- The Scheme envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for these women.
- Swadhar Greh will be set up in every district with capacity of 30 women
- For big cities and other districts having more than 40 lakh population or those districts where there is a need for additional support to the women, more than one Swadhar Greh could be established.

Objectives

- To cater to the primary need of shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care of the women in distress and who are without any social and economic support.
- To enable them to regain their emotional strength that gets hampered due to their encounter with unfortunate circumstances.
- To provide them with legal aid and guidance to enable them to take steps for their readjustment in family/society.
- To enable them to start their life afresh with dignity and conviction.

Beneficiaries:

- Women who are deserted and are without any social and economic support;
- Women survivors of natural disasters who have been rendered homeless and are without any socio-economic support;
- Women prisoners released from jail and are without family, social and economic support;
- Women victims of domestic violence, family tension or discord, who are made to leave their homes without any means of subsistence and have no special protection from exploitation and/ or facing litigation on account of marital disputes; and
- Trafficked women/girls rescued or runaway from brothels or other places where they face exploitation and
- Women affected by HIV/AIDS who do not have any social or economic support. However such women/ girls should first seek assistance under UJJAWALA Scheme in areas where it is in operation



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