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8th January 2021

Issue: Government initiative to increase transparency.

What is the name of the Project?

- Smart metering project.

About the Project:

- Rs 75.64 crore three-phase smart meter project, the Chief Minister said that the consumer-friendly system would help reduce human error in manual reading by auto-downloading data.
- From January to December, a total of 96,000 meters would be installed across the state by the PSPCL under the project, which would also help curb the malpractice of reading concealment/theft of electricity and improve the reading/billing efficiency and quality.
- PSPCL CMD A Venu Prasad stated: Consumers will be able to replace a meter with a prepaid or postpaid meter.

- The rate discount qualifies the consumer under the prepaid option and the same meter can be used as a two-way counter for net solar counting.

(Source: Punjab tribune)

Topic: Protection of Consumer Rights.

Portal Launched.

What is the name of the Portal?

- e-Daakhil portal.

How would that benefit consumers?

- This would help customers protect their rights.
- It would give them an effective mechanism to protect them from the exploitation of merchants.

(Source: Punjab tribune)

Topic: Economy

What is the news?

- The Punjab government plans factories and petrol pumps

in prisons for self-sufficiency.

- The Punjab Jail Development Board, based on the Telangana model, will become operational this year.
- Punjab would be the second state after Telangana to create such a board for the self-sufficiency of prisons and to strengthen their infrastructure.
- Former DGP (Prisons) Telangana VK Singh and Director, IIM Rohtak Dheeraj Sharma have been appointed as advisers by the government to study and replicate the Telangana model in Punjab.

How?

- The products manufactured in Punjab jails have an annual turnover of Rs 1.25 crore to Rs 1.5 crore, whereas Telangana jails, with just one-fourth the capacity of Punjab, had a turnover Rs 600 crore, out of which Rs 550 crore come from petrol pumps only.

Steps were taken:

- Punjab Prisons Development Board Act had come into force and Punjab Prisons Development Board Rules have been framed with the appointment of two independent members SP Singh Oberoi (director, Sarbat Da Bhala Trust) and Monica Dhawan (director, India Vision Foundation).
- The board aims at unlocking “the commercial potential of jails, enhancement of the capacity of factories in them, to ensure the department becomes financially self-sufficient and to enable prisoners to gain new skills to make them employable on release.

Reducing the economic burden to state:

- Implementation of Artificial Intelligence-based CCTV surveillance system in jails, setting up of 105 video conferencing studios in various jails with adequate infrastructure and connectivity for the trial of inmates through video conferencing. The videoconference trial, he said, will assist the state to save Rs 45 lakh a day.

For Good Mental health of Prisoners:

- The project of body-worn cameras sponsored by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs would be undertaken with an aim to ensure behavioral therapy of inmates through a psychological approach.

(Source: Indian Express)

Topic: Economy

What is the news?

- Punjab has yet to complete 85 percent of NREGA work this fiscal year.
- Despite generating 269 lakh person-days and starting on a good note, despite Covid-19, Punjab has only managed to complete 15 per cent of work targeted under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) scheme.
- There are still 3 months of the financial year left to achieve the remaining target of 85 per cent. The state, meanwhile, has utilised 60 per cent of the total grant earmarked for this financial year majority for the wages.

Important:

- Under the NREGA, the 60:40 ratio should be maintained for the money to be spent on salaries and hardware, respectively. But in the state, till date 76 per cent amount has been spent on the wages and 22.22 per cent on the material. In some districts, the expenditure on the material is only around 10 per cent and 90 per cent is spent on the wages only out of the grant spent to date.

About MGNREGA:

- The MGNREGA was initiated with the objective of “enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work”. Employment under MGNREGA is a legal entitlement.

(Source: Indian Express)

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