**Syllabus subtopic:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

**Prelims and Mains focus:** About Atal Bhujal Yojana, its key features and significance; the rohtang tunnel and its significance

**News:** On the eve of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s birth anniversary, the Union cabinet on Tuesday approved the World Bank-funded Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal Jal), which aims to improve ground water management in seven states.

**About Atal Jal (Atal Bhujal Yojana)**

**Objective:** Since, groundwater contributes nearly 65% of India’s total irrigated area, with ABY, the Central Government seeks to promote Panchayat led ground water management and behavioural change with primary focus on demand side management. The scheme will also help in supplying water to every house hold by 2024.

**Nodal Agency:** Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

**Implementation:** The scheme will be implemented in identified areas covering 8,350 villages in 78 districts of 7 states- Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The implementation period for plan is over a period of five years from 2020 to 2025.

**Two major components of Atal Jal Yojana:**

(1) **Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Component**- for strengthening institutional arrangements for sustainable ground water management in States. It envisages active participation of communities in various activities such as:

- **Water budgeting**- water management tool that assists communities for the
proper management of water resources, by estimating the amount of water a landscape will require.

- Monitoring and disseminating ground water data
- Formation of Water User Associations
- Preparation/implementation of gram panchayat-wise water security plans
- Information, Education and communication (IEC) activities, relating to sustainable ground water management.

(2) Incentive Component for incentivising the States— for achievements in improved groundwater management practices such as implementation of management interventions through convergence of ongoing schemes, adopting demand side management practices among others.

- The Atal Jal scheme had been approved by the World Bank board in June 2018. It was waiting for the Union cabinet’s approval for the last several months.
- The total budget of the scheme will be Rs 6,000 crore, of which Rs 3,000 crore will be contributed by the World Bank.

Other decisions taken by the Cabinet

1. Strategic tunnel under Rohtang Pass
   - The Union cabinet also approved the strategic tunnel under Rohtang Pass to be renamed after Vajpayee.
   - The historic decision to construct a strategic tunnel below the Rohtang Pass was taken on June 3, 2000, when late Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister. The foundation stone for the access road to the south portal of the tunnel was laid on May 26, 2002.
   - The tunnel is now nearing completion and is a step in the direction of providing all-weather connectivity to remote border areas of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, which otherwise remained cut-off from the rest of the country for about six months during winters.
   - The 8.8-km tunnel is the world’s longest tunnel above an altitude of 3,000 metres. It will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 46 km and save crores of rupees in transport costs.

2. In another decision, the cabinet approved the Promulgation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019, which seeks to remove certain ambiguities in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy
3. The cabinet also granted ex-post facto approval to amend Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 (BEFR). The amendment will extend BEFR to the state of Manipur to give its indigenous people protection from the provisions of Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, and make necessary changes in the said regulation.