





## Today's Prelims Topics

### President's invite for 'At Home' to honour crafts from South

#### Context

Invitees for the 'At Home' will receive a specially curated box of craftwork from the five southern States — Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh along with the card.

#### About GI Tagged products crafted for the Invitees

<p><b>Pochampally ikat on pencil pouch</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pochampally ikat is a weaving technique and style that originated in the village of Pochampally in the Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri district of <b>Telangana</b>.</li> <li>● It is known for its bold, geometric patterns in red, black, and white. The patterns often feature flowers, birds, and animals</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mysore Ganjifa Fridge Magnet</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inspired by the intricate art seen in <b>Ganjifa playing cards</b>.</li> <li>● Mysore Ganjifa is a traditional card game and art form from <b>Mysore (Karnataka)</b> that combines strategic gameplay with intricate designs and Hindu mythology.</li> <li>● The game was invented in the 19th century by the ruler of Mysore, <b>Mummudi Krishnaraja Wodeyar III</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kanjivaram Silk Pouch</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kanjivaram silk is a type of silk saree that originated in the town of <b>Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu</b>.</li> <li>● It's known for its bright colors, elaborate designs and thick fabric.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Etikoppaka Toys</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● They are also known as <b>Etikoppaka Bommalu</b>, are traditional wooden toys made by artisans <b>Etikoppaka, Andhra Pradesh</b>.</li> <li>● Etikoppaka dolls are made from softwood called <b>ankudu</b> and colored with natural dyes from seeds, bark, roots, leaves and lac.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Screw pine bookmark</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Screw pine craft is a <b>traditional cottage industry in Kerala</b>.</li> </ul>



- It involves weaving mats, wall hangings and other items from the leaves of the screw pine plant.
- The craft has been practiced by women in Kerala for over **800 years**.
- Screw pine plant grows wild along the banks of rivers, canals and ponds in Kerala.
- The leaves are fibrous and have sharp thorns on both edges. The roots are used to make paintbrushes

Source:

- [The Hindu - Crafts from south](#)



## New Appointment Process for the Chief Election Commissioner

### Context

The **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023** introduced a significant change in the selection process for the CEC and Election Commissioners (ECs).

### About appointment of Chief Election Commissioner

- **Article 324:** It says CEC and ECs will be appointed by the President, this is subject to Parliamentary law (if such law exists).
- **Intervention of Supreme Court:** In 2023, the Constitution Bench of the SC in **Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India** case changed the process for Election Commission appointments in order to secure their independence.
  - It created a committee comprising the **PM, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and the Chief Justice of India (CJI)**.
  - This committee will make recommendations and advise the President on Election Commission appointments **until Parliament enacts a separate law on the subject**.
- **Changes in the 2023 Act:**
  - The **CJI was excluded** from the Selection Committee.
  - The two current ECs, Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, were appointed under this provision.

### Traditional Practice and Changes Introduced

- **Traditional Practice:** The CEC's successor was traditionally chosen from within the Election Commission, generally **the senior-most EC**.
- **New Provision:** The **2023 Act** allows for the appointment of individuals from **outside the Election Commission**, widening the pool of eligible candidates.

### Key Provisions of the 2023 Act

- **Section 5: Eligibility** - Candidates for the post of CEC and ECs must be **current or former Secretary-level officers**.
- **Section 6: Search Committee** - A **Search Committee**, chaired by the **Law Minister**, prepares a panel of **5 names for consideration**.
  - The Search Committee includes **two other members**, both holding ranks not below Secretary to the Government of India.
- **Section 7: Selection Committee** - The **Selection Committee** includes:
  - **Prime Minister**
  - **A Cabinet Minister**
  - **Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha or leader of the single largest opposition party**.
- This committee can choose from the panel prepared by the Search Committee or consider **"any other person"** outside the Election Commission.

### Source:

- [Indian Express - selection process for next Chief Election Commissioner casts wider net](#)

## Section - 479 of BNSS

### Context

The Central Government has directed all States and Union Territories (UTs) to implement Section 479 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS).

### About Section 479 of BNSS

- It aims to provide relief to undertrial prisoners and address overcrowding in jails.
- It focuses on reducing prolonged detention by allowing the release of eligible undertrial prisoners based on the portion of their sentence already served.
- It is based on **Section 436-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC)**.
- **Key Provisions of Section 479:**
  - **Eligibility for Release:**
    - **First-Time Offenders:** Eligible for release on bond after serving **one-third** of their maximum potential sentence.
    - **Other Undertrial Prisoners:** Eligible for bail after serving **half** of their maximum potential sentence.
  - **Role of Prison Authorities:** Prison superintendents must file applications with the courts for the release of eligible prisoners.
    - It does not apply to offences punishable by death or life imprisonment.

According to the **National Crime Records Bureau's report Prison Statistics India 2022**, of the 5,73,220 people incarcerated in Indian prisons, 4,34,302 (**75.8%**) are **undertrials** against whom cases are still pending.

### Source:

- [Times of India - Relief to undertrial prisoners](#)
- [UN Convention against Cybercrime](#)

### Context

Recently the UN General Assembly has adopted the Convention against Cybercrime.

### About UN Convention against Cybercrime

- Convention against cybercrime was adopted by **193 UN Member States by consensus**.
- It is aimed at strengthening international cooperation to combat cybercrime and protecting societies from digital threats.
- The Convention against Cybercrime **will open for signature in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2025**.
- It is the **1st legally binding UN instrument** on cybercrime & will enter into force **90 days after being ratified by 40th signatory**.

### Key Provisions

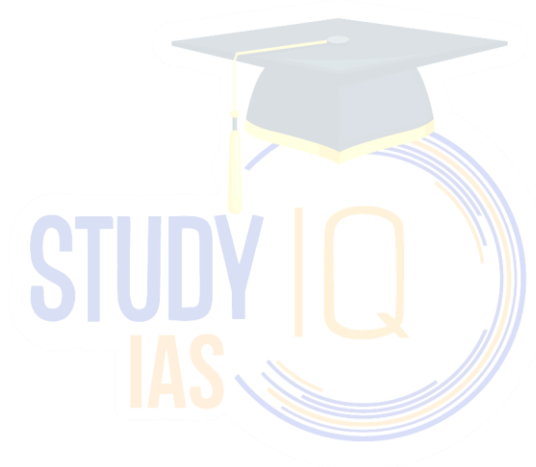
- **Differentiates between: Cyber-Dependent Crimes** (e.g., hacking) and **Cyber-Enabled Crimes** (e.g., online fraud).
- It defines **digital evidence** and establishes clear standards for its handling.
- **It creates a central body for:**
  - Coordinating international cybercrime efforts.
  - Sharing intelligence and technical expertise.
  - Advising on emerging threats and legal developments.
- **Capacity Building:** It aims to enhance the capabilities of developing countries by providing: Technical assistance, Training programs and Resources to combat cybercrime effectively.
- **Prevention:** It encourages awareness campaigns, education and a culture of cybersecurity.
  - It also promotes public-private partnerships to protect vulnerable groups (e.g., children) from online threats.

### **Budapest Convention**

- It was established by the **Council of Europe in 2001 and became effective in 2004.**
- It facilitates cross-border cybercrime investigations and serves as a model for national cybercrime laws and international cooperation.
- **India is not a signatory to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.**

**Source:**

- **United Nations - Making the digital and physical world safer**



## Centre allows Kerala to use SDRF funds for Wayanad rehabilitation

### Context

The Union government has permitted Kerala to utilise ₹120 crore from SDRF for rehabilitation measures for the Wayanad landslide survivors.

### About Disaster Response Funds

- **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF):**
  - It is defined under **Section-46 of Disaster Management Act, 2005 (DM Act)**.
  - It is a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.
  - NDRF amount can be spent **only** towards meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation.
  - NDRF is a **Public Account**. It is financed through various means:
    - **Cess on certain items:** A cess is levied on certain items and is chargeable to excise and customs duty.
    - **Budgetary support:** NDRF also receives additional budgetary support.
    - **National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD):** it is a duty of excise and customs levied on certain goods, including **tobacco** products.
  - **The National Executive Committee (NEC)** of the National Disaster Management Authority takes decisions on the expenses from NDRF.
- **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF):**
  - SDRF is established under **Section 48 (1) of DM Act**.
  - The Central Government contributes to the SDRF as follows:
    - **General category States/UTs:** 75%
    - **Special category States/UTs:** 90%
  - **SDRF covers the following disasters:** Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack and frost and cold waves.
  - **Local Disaster:** A State Government can use up to **10% of the funds available under the SDRF for providing immediate relief to the victims of natural disasters** that they consider to be 'disasters' within the local context in the State and which are not included in the notified list of disasters of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

### Source:

- [The Hindu - Kerala to use SDRF funds for Wayanad rehabilitation](#)

## Nimesulide ban - Another step toward saving vultures

### Context

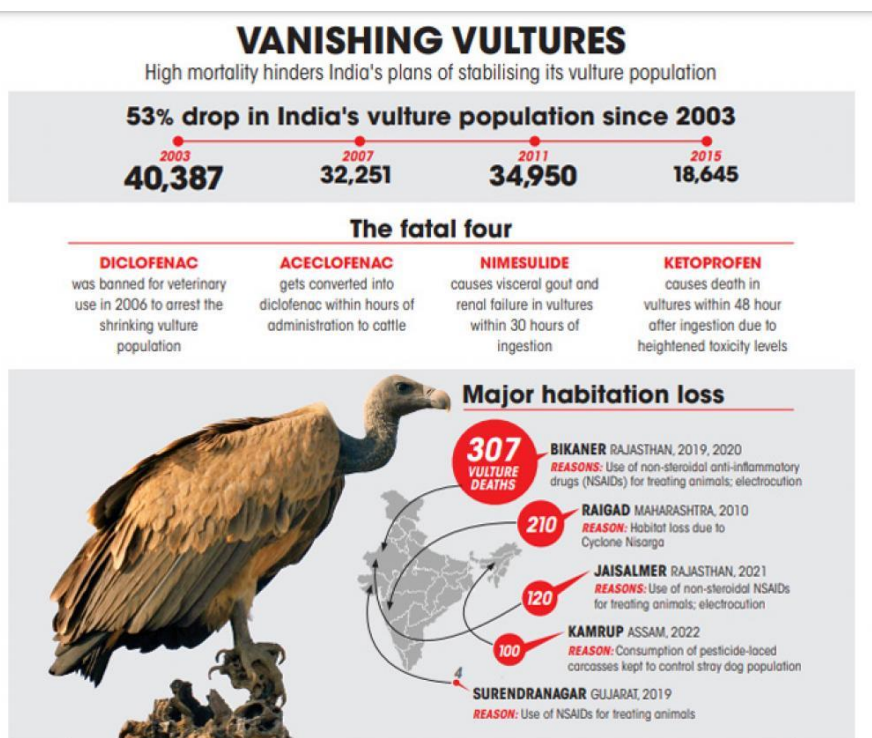
The Union Government has **banned painkiller nimesulide** after research confirms its lethality for vultures.

### About Nimesulide & its impact on Vultures

- It is a **non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID)** widely used to relieve pain and inflammation.
- It not only impacts vultures but is also not suitable for administration in humans.
- It is banned under **section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.**
- **Drugs that are banned due to their threat to vultures:** Diclofenac, Ketoprofen, Aceclofenac & Nimesulide.

### Key Issues Leading to the Decline of Vultures

- **Population Collapse:**
  - The **white-rumped vulture** population has declined by over **99%** over recent decades.
  - The primary cause is the use of NSAIDs in veterinary medicine, especially drugs like **diclofenac** and **nimesulide**, which are toxic to vultures.



- NSAIDs, when consumed by vultures feeding on treated livestock carcasses, lead to:
  - **Kidney damage** (indicated by visceral gout).
  - High mortality rates due to poisoning.

### Source:

- [The Hindu - Nimesulide ban yet another step toward saving vultures](#)
- [Down to Earth](#)

## Places in News

### Sudan

- According to the **United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)**, an estimated 3.2 million children under the age of five are expected to face acute malnutrition this year in war-torn Sudan.



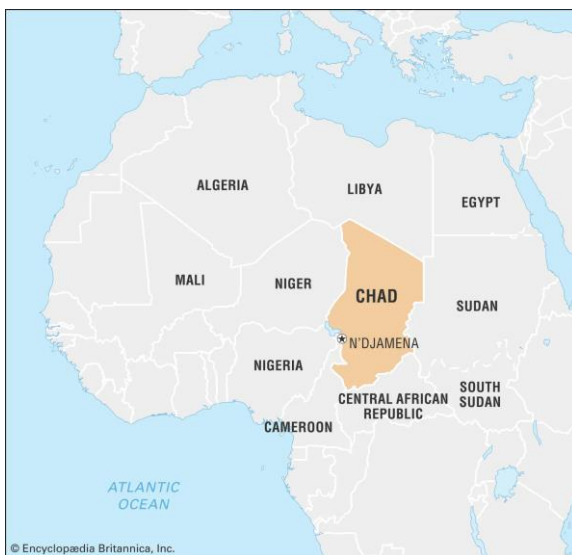
- **Location:** Northeastern Africa. (Capital- Khartoum)
- **Bordering Countries:** Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad and Libya.
- Sudan is **Africa’s 3 largest** country by area.
- **Major rivers:** Blue Nile, White Nile & Arbata.
- **Nubian Desert:** Rocky, arid desert in northeastern Sudan.
- **Major Ports:** Port Sudan, Osaief Port and Suakin Port.
- **Conflict Regions:**
  - **Darfur Region:** Ongoing civil war between the Arab and African communities.
  - **Abyei Region:** Disputed between South Sudan and Sudan. It is an **oil rich region**.

Source:

- [The Hindu - Acute malnutrition](#)

### Chad

- Recently the Presidential palace of Chad was attacked. When this incident occurred President Mahamat Deby Itno was inside the palace.



- **Location:** Landlocked country in **north-central Africa**.
- **Bordering countries:** Libya, Sudan, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger.
- It is a **semi-desert** country, rich in **gold and uranium**.
- Its **highest peak is Mount Koussi** (Emi Koussi). It is an extinct volcano.
- **Major Rivers:** Chari and Logone.
- **Lake Chad:** Located at the junction of **Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon**.

Source:

- [The Hindu - Attack on Chad presidential palace](#)



### Gulf of Mexico

- Recently US President-elect Donald Trump proposed **renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America.**
- **The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)** governs naming conventions for seas, oceans, and navigable waters.
  - But John Nyberg, director of the IHO, clarified that **there is no formal international protocol for renaming maritime areas.**



- **Bordering Countries:** USA, Mexico & Cuba.
- It connects to the **Atlantic Ocean through the Straits of Florida** and to the **Caribbean Sea via the Yucatán Channel.**
- It is vulnerable to **hurricanes and twisters** due to warm waters and favourable atmospheric conditions.
- **Major rivers draining:** Mississippi & Rio Grande.
- **Resources:** Major source of petroleum and natural gas & Fishing.

**Source:**

- [Indian Express - Gulf of Mexico](#)

## News in Short

### PM to Attend AI Action Summit in France

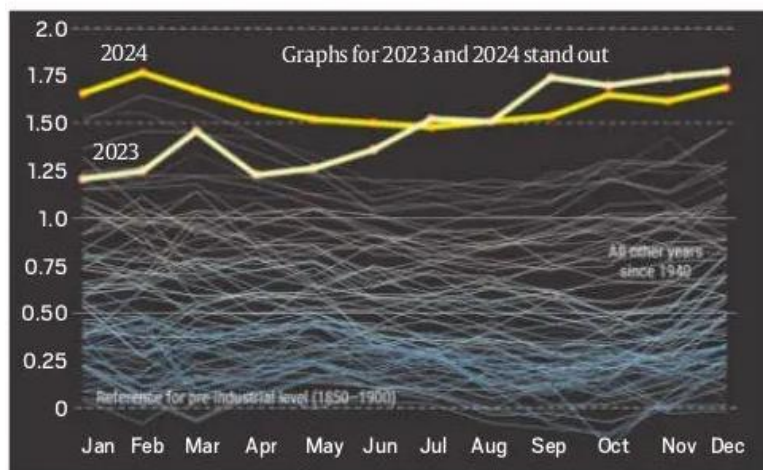
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit in Paris on February 10-11, 2025.
- The summit will be hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron at the Grand Palais in Paris.
- It aims to foster international dialogue on AI, bringing together global leaders to discuss innovation, regulation and the future of AI technologies.
- **The event will focus on 5 key themes:** Public interest in AI, the future of work, innovation and culture, trust in AI and global AI governance.
- In July 2024, India also organised the **Global AI Summit in New Delhi as chair of GPAI (Global Partnership on AI)**.

Source:

- [The Hindu - PM Modi to visit Paris for AI summit next month](#)

### Breaching 1.5 Degree

- **News?** → 2024 was the first year in history when **mean global temperature went 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level** as per the data released by **Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S)**.



### Key International Agreements Related to Climate Change

- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – 1992:** Stabilize greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations.
- **Kyoto Protocol – 1997:** Commit developed countries (Annex I parties) to reduce GHG emissions by an average of 5% below 1990 levels during the first commitment period (2008-2012).
  - Major emitters like the **USA never ratified it**.
  - **Doha Amendment – 2012:** Extended the Kyoto Protocol with a second commitment period (2013-2020).
- **Paris Agreement – 2015:** Keep global temperature rise well below 2°C, with efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- **Montreal Protocol – 1987:** Agreement to phase out ozone-depleting substances (ODS).
  - **Kigali Amendment (2016):** Added hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) to the list of controlled substances to combat global warming.
- **COP Summits (Conference of the Parties):** Annual meetings under the UNFCCC framework to negotiate climate actions.
  - **COP21 (2015):** Adoption of the **Paris Agreement**.

- **COP27 (2022):** Establishment of a **Loss and Damage Fund** for vulnerable countries.
- **COP 29 (2024):** Establishment of the **New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG)**
- **Global Methane Pledge – 2021:** : Aims to reduce global methane emissions by 30% by 2030 (compared to 2020 levels).
  - India is not a signatory.

### National Youth Festival - 12th January

- It is also the **birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.**
- Initiatives for Empowering India's Youth**
- **National Youth Festival:** Annual event celebrating youth empowerment and talent.
  - Reimagined as "**Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue.**"
  - Focuses on national integration, leadership, and cultural diversity.
- **Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat) Initiative:** Autonomous body established in 2023.
  - Aims to provide equal opportunities for youth development.
  - Focuses on youth-led initiatives and technology-driven solutions.
- **Viksit Bharat Challenge:** Four-stage competition promoting youth participation in nation-building.
  - Includes a quiz, essay writing, pitch decks, and a national championship.
- **National Youth Policy (NYP) 2014:** Five objectives and 11 priority areas, including skill development, education, and entrepreneurship.
  - Reviewed for a new roadmap aligned with SDGs, targeting youth development by 2030.
- **National Youth Awards:** Recognizes outstanding contributions of individuals and NGOs to nation-building.
  - Awards include cash prizes, medals, and certificates.
- **National Youth Parliament Festival:** Encourages youth (18–25 years) to engage in political dialogue.
  - Conducted at district, state, and national levels.
- **Skill India Mission:** Provides skill training to enhance employability.
  - Focuses on vocational training and entrepreneurship.
- **Start-Up India Initiative:** Encourages entrepreneurship among youth.
  - Offers financial support and a conducive environment for startups.
- **Digital India Programme:** Empowers youth with digital literacy and opportunities.
  - Promotes digital entrepreneurship and innovation.
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):** Provides financial assistance for self-employment ventures.
- **Fit India Movement:** Promotes physical fitness and health awareness among youth.
- **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan:** Involves youth in rural development through technology and innovation.

## Editorial Summary

### AI Integration in India's Defence Sector

#### Context

India is modernizing its military with a defence budget of ₹6.21 lakh crore (\$75 billion) in 2023, focusing on AI integration.

#### Progress in Military AI Integration

- **Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** has highlighted AI's revolutionary potential in military operations, such as **predictive analytics and autonomous decision-making systems**.
- India participates in international AI initiatives, indicating a strategic focus on military AI development.
- AI applications like the **Indrajaal autonomous drone security system** have been developed.
- **Microsoft** has committed \$3 billion to build data centers in Telangana, showcasing international investment in India's AI ecosystem.

#### Hurdles in AI Deployment

- **Infrastructure and Financial Constraints:** Lack of digitized data to train AI systems.
  - High costs of AI-compatible data centers.
  - Limited resources due to the focus on replacing outdated legacy systems like older aircraft.
- **Policy Gaps:**
  - **National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence:** Outlines India's vision but lacks detailed implementation mechanisms.
  - **Responsible AI for All:** Emphasizes transparency and accountability but falls short on military-specific AI recommendations.
- **Fragmented Governance:** Bodies like the **Defence Artificial Intelligence Council (DAIC)** and **Defence AI Project Agency (DAIPA)** aim to address gaps but lack visible progress.
- **India's Strategic Clarity Is Inconsistent:** While AI is acknowledged as critical, leaders express concerns about its potential risks.
  - The External Affairs Minister compared AI's dangers to nuclear weapons.
  - Prime Minister Modi warned of AI's "darker sides" during the **Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) in 2023**.

#### Other Challenges

- **Siloed Armed Forces:** Separate doctrines, systems, and communication practices among the **Army, Navy, and Air Force** hinder interoperability and joint operations.
- **Reliance on Public Sector Units (PSUs):** Defence manufacturing has historically been PSU-dominated, despite the rise of capable private companies and startups.

#### Strategic Recommendations for AI Adoption

- **Strengthen Policies and Frameworks:** Implement robust guidelines for AI deployment and regulation.
- **Tackle Inter-Service Silos:** Foster interoperability across the armed forces.
- **Promote Private Sector Involvement:** Need for **public-private partnerships (PPPs)** to ensure large-scale, high-quality system deployment.
  - **Example:** The space sector's transformation through PPPs serves as a model.
- **Collaborate Internationally:** Enhance global partnerships for technological advancements.

Source: [The Hindu: India's journey so far on the AI military bandwagon](#)

## Legal MSP Demand

### Context

Recently demand for **legal guarantee to minimum support price (MSP)** raised by the agitating farmers in Punjab.

### What is the Minimum Support Price?

- The Minimum Support Price (MSP) is the price at which the **government commits to buying farmers' crops** if market prices drop **below this predetermined level**.
- The **Government sets the MSP** at the start of the sowing season, based on the recommendation of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**.
- **Process of Awarding MSP:**
  - **Recommendation Stage**
    - **Entity Involved:** Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)
    - **Action:** Submits annual Price Policy Reports to the government
    - **Considerations:** Production costs, demand-supply dynamics, market trends, inter-crop price relationships
  - **Decision Stage**
    - **Entity Involved:** Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), led by the Prime Minister
    - **Action:** Reviews and approves MSP levels
    - **Inputs:** CACP's Price Policy Report, state government opinions, national demand-supply situation
  - **Procurement Stage**
    - **Entity Involved:** Food Corporation of India (FCI) and State agencies
    - **Action:** Execute procurement of crops
    - **Timing:** Commences at the start of the planting season.

### Need for a Legal MSP

- **Mitigating Price Risk:** Agriculture is inherently risky due to unpredictable factors like weather, pests, and diseases.
  - Price risk, which occurs due to market fluctuations, can be addressed through a legal MSP, ensuring farmers receive a fair price for their produce.
- **Encouraging Farmers to Stay in Agriculture:** The diversion of fertile agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes and the decline in serious farming households threaten agricultural sustainability.
  - A legal MSP can provide a stable income, incentivizing farmers to continue farming instead of selling their land for other uses.
- **Boosting Investment in Farming:** Assurance of remunerative prices encourages farmers to invest in modern technologies and practices to enhance yields and reduce costs.
  - E.g., the Green Revolution was supported by such assurances.
- **Promoting Crop Diversification:** A legal MSP can encourage farmers to diversify from resource-intensive crops like paddy to sustainable alternatives such as pulses, oilseeds, and maize. This can reduce environmental degradation and water depletion.
- **Formalizing and Digitizing Agriculture Trade:** A Price Deficiency Payment (PDP) system, as part of a legal MSP framework, would promote formal and digitized trade.
  - Farmers would demand receipts for sales, enhancing transparency and efficiency in agricultural transactions.
- **Strategic and Food Security Imperatives:** India must ensure self-reliance in food production to feed its growing population and reduce dependence on imports.

- A legal MSP would provide the financial stability needed for farmers to sustain and expand their operations.
- **Enhancing Farmer-Consumer Equilibrium:** Ensuring stable incomes for farmers through MSP aligns with consumer self-interest by maintaining a robust and secure supply chain for food and agricultural products.

#### Challenges Associated with an MSP Law

- **Complex Implementation of Punitive Action:** Legal provisions may mandate penalties for transactions below MSP.
  - However, enforcing these actions is challenging and could deter buyers from participating in regulated markets during price fluctuations.
- **Exclusion of Small and Marginal Farmers:** With limited access to regulated markets and low holding capacity, over 80% of smallholders may be forced to sell produce outside these markets, often at lower prices.
- **Creation of Black Markets:** Fear of punitive measures could lead to unregulated parallel markets, further reducing the transparency and efficiency of agricultural trade.
- **Geographical and Infrastructure Gaps:** Inadequate density of regulated wholesale markets (one market per 450 sq km vs. the optimal 80 sq km) results in small farmers selling at the farm gate, bypassing MSP entirely.
- **Income Risk Beyond Price Risk:** MSP laws address price risk but do not secure incomes against other risks like rising costs or fluctuating demand.
  - E.g., despite high procurement levels in states like Punjab and Haryana, farmers' incomes have declined.
- **Environmental and Resource Concerns:** Over-reliance on MSP for certain crops like wheat and rice has led to environmental degradation, groundwater depletion, and unsustainable farming practices.

#### Way Forward

- **Diversified Support Mechanisms:** Adopt a combination of direct income support (e.g., PM-Kisan), price deficiency payments, and limited procurement to safeguard farmer incomes and livelihoods.
- **Promote Crop Diversification:** Encourage the shift from water-intensive crops like rice to alternatives such as pulses, oilseeds, and millets through incentives and awareness campaigns.
- **Enhance Market Infrastructure:** Develop village-level markets equipped with regulated storage, standardization, and certification facilities to improve quality and access to better prices.
- **Strengthen Warehousing and Financing:** Expand regulated warehousing capacity and promote e-Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (eNWR) financing to increase farmers' holding power and reduce distress sales.
- **Reorient Subsidy Policies:** Transition from unsustainable subsidies (electricity, fertilizers) to direct financial assistance that aligns with sustainable agricultural practices and reduces environmental harm.
- **Strengthen Agricultural Extension:** Empower Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and block-level agricultural offices to educate farmers about sustainable practices, policy implications, and market opportunities while establishing feedback channels with policymakers.
- **Facilitate Direct Market Linkages:** Enable partnerships between farmers and processors or other value chain participants to align production with market demand and ensure better returns.

#### Sources:

- [Indian Express: Agree/ Disagree: Legal MSP](#)
- [The Wire: Amid Demand for MSP Guarantee, What Can Actually Protect Farmer Lives?](#)