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## Momentum to Silo Storage of Food Grains

Storage of food grains in silos has gained momentum in India and it can help the country to overcome huge losses from poor storage facilities.

- Currently foodgrains in India are stored in archaic warehouses without any use of technology.
- According to **United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation**, produce worth \$14 billion is damaged annually in India due to poor storage, when about 200 million Indians go hungry every day.
- In 2010 India was the second largest horticultural producer in the world but about 30 percent of the fruit and vegetables were wasted.

### Silo Storage

- Silo structures follow a scientific method of storing grains where stored grain is kept dry and aired so as to prevent fungal and insect attacks.
- There are two types of silos: one is silos with rail connectivity and the second is standalone silos without rail connectivity.
- If land is taken into account, silos are cheaper than building conventional warehouses.
- When the North American mid-west came under the plough during the 19th and 20th centuries, the first thing that was done was to build large grain silos and a railway system to export the grain and now the U.S. has a permanent storage capacity nearly equivalent to its annual grain production.
- In India there are only four silos-one each in Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Hapur-Ghaziabad which is largely insufficient to cater the need of grain storage in proportion to massive food production.

### Advantages of Silo Storage

Bulk storage in silos has advantages over bag storage, as follows:

- low running costs;
- low labour requirements;
- rapid handling;
- low through spillage and rodents;
- efficient and effective fumigation operation;
- less land area requirement;
- complete control of aeration;
- possible to store the grain for longer periods;
- possible to mechanise all operations; and
- possible to store moist grain for short periods.

## Current Storage Practice and Concerns Associated

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- Grain in India is stored using the cover and plinth method (CAP).
- In this method stacks of bagged grain are kept outdoor, covered with a waterproof material which is very cheap and easy to make.
- During the rainy season this method of storage becomes risky as with the humidity in the air and the warmth of the summer there is rampant fungal attack which makes the grain mouldy.
- India stores about 65 million tons of foodgrain, most of which is stored in conventional open or covered godowns prone to damage and the vagaries of weather.
- According to a **World Health Organisation** paper, **mycotoxins** found in mouldy grain/foods, are associated with human disease and produce aflatoxins (cancer-causing) and other toxins.
- The mycotoxins which we seek to prevent by keeping food dry in our homes are already present from the time the flour was stored in the form of grain.
- In countries like US, grain is stored in silos which is the best practice available to store grains in bulk.

## Way Forward

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- Silos are the ideal mode of storage, particularly for a nation such as India which depends on buffer stock for its food security. The concept also benefits all the stakeholders, be it farmers, government or procuring agencies.
  - A step for silo storage infrastructure should be taken up starting from states like Punjab and Haryana which are the bread baskets of India from where nearly two-thirds of the foodgrain requirement is sourced.
  - Given the monsoon weather conditions which leads to mouldy grain, it is high time for India to switch to silo structure for storing produce to ensure food security as well as good health of the people.
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# Standardising Skill Training, Imparting Digital Literacy

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To ensure standardisation of training and learning across all programmes, the Directorate General of Training (DGT) has aligned its courses with National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), a competency-based framework.

- An instruction trainer manual for imparting NSQF aligned training has been launched by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- Aim: To create a standardised skilled workforce with high degree of horizontal and vertical mobility
- A tripartite MoU has also been signed between DGT, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Adobe India on skill development.

## Digital literacy

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### Adobe Digital Disha

- The collaboration with Adobe will follow the launch of Adobe Digital Disha — a programme to impart digital literacy to over one million students and teachers across India by the year 2020.
- The programme is focused on helping vocational institutes leverage the power of a free online and mobile graphic design app "Adobe Spark" to integrate creativity and digital literacy into classrooms and curriculum.
- Adobe Spark is a storytelling Creative Cloud application that runs in any web or mobile browser.
- This will enable students to quickly express themselves via graphics, web stories and video to creatively approach their assignments as well as develop digital portfolios. Teachers can easily create digital lesson plans and tutorials using Spark applications.

### UAV/ Drone Pilots

A new course, "Unmanned aerial vehicle/drone pilot", has also been launched to create trained people who can fly drones observing standard guidelines and carry out its maintenance.

## NOTE

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**NSQF: The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)** is a competency-based framework that organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude.

- These levels, graded from one to ten, are defined in terms of learning outcomes which the learner must possess regardless of whether they are obtained through formal, non-formal or informal learning.
- The NSQF would also help shift emphasis to outcome based learning - both in the general and vocational space.
- NSDC: National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is a not-for-profit public limited company incorporated under Companies Act, 1956 .
- NSDC was set up by Ministry of Finance as Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. The Government of India through Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) holds 49% of the share capital of NSDC, while the private sector holds 51% of the share capital.
- NSDC aims to promote skill development by catalyzing creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions. NSDC acts as a catalyst in skill development by providing funding to enterprises, companies and organizations that provide skill training. It also develops appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives.

**National Digital Literacy Mission ('NDLM')** has been initiated with the vision to empower at least one person per household with crucial digital literacy skills by 2020.

- NDLM is an effort to complement government's vision to transform one from each household as digitally literate.
- The project aims at helping adults with low technological literacy develop the skills they need to interact in an increasingly digital world.

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## Odisha plans Legislative Council

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The Odisha government is expected to introduce a Bill in the Odisha Assembly for the creation of a Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council (LC), a second House of legislature.

- The State Cabinet has approved a 49-member Legislative Council, accepting the report of a committee set up in 2015 to study the functioning of the second chamber in other States and make recommendations.
- The committee recommended that Members of the Legislative Council's (MLC) salary should be the same as the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).
- According to it, like the MLAs, the MLCs too should be entitled to Local Area Development (LAD) funds and they should be given the opportunity to become ministers.

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## Background

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- Currently, six states have Legislative Councils- Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh.
- Proposals to create Councils in Rajasthan and Assam are pending in Parliament.
- While the parliamentary committee that looked into these Bills cleared the proposals, it struck a cautionary note.
  - It wanted a national policy on having an Upper House in State legislatures to be framed by the Union government, so that a subsequent government doesn't abolish it.
  - It also favoured a review of the provision in the law for Councils to have seats for graduates and teachers.

## Constitutional Provisions

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- India's transition from unicameral to bicameral legislature started under the Government of India Act, 1919, which established the council of state—now the Rajya Sabha—in 1921.
- The Montague-Chelmsford report, which envisaged formation of the Upper House at the Centre also proposed Upper Houses in provinces.
- Later under the Government of India Bill, 1935 Upper Houses were established in Bengal, the United Provinces, Bihar, Bombay, Madras and Assam in the middle of 1937.
- Consequently, the Indian Constitution provided for Article 169.
  - According to **Article 169**, a Legislative Council can be formed “if the Legislative Assembly of the State passes a resolution to that effect by a majority of the total membership of the Assembly and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting”.
  - Parliament can then pass a law to this effect.
- Under **Article 171** of the Constitution, the Legislative Council of a state shall not have more than one-third of the total number of MLAs of the state, and not less than 40 members.
- However, as an exception - in Jammu & Kashmir, as per Section 50 of the state's Constitution, the Assembly has 87 members and the Legislative Council 36.
- As with Rajya Sabha MPs, the tenure of a MLC is six years, with one-third of the members retiring every two years.
- Similarly, MLCs are not directly elected by voters - like Rajya Sabha.

## Election Procedure

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- One-third of the MLCs are elected by the state's MLAs,
- One-third by a special electorate comprising sitting members of local governments such as municipalities and district boards,
- 1/12th by an electorate of teachers, and

- 1/12th by registered graduates.
- The remaining members are appointed by the Governor for distinguished services in various fields.

## Why a second House

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- A second House can help check hasty actions by the directly elected House, and also enable non-elected individuals to contribute to the legislative process.
- It provides a forum for academicians and intellectuals, who are arguably not suited for the rough and tumble of electoral politics.
- It provides a mechanism for a more sober and considered appraisal of legislation that a State may pass.
- Other arguments cited in favour of Legislative Councils range from their track record of sincere work, relevant amendments brought, non-confrontational attitude vis-à-vis legislative assembly, decorum and restraint in proceedings and drawing attention of both government and public to matters of public interest.

## Shortcomings of a second House

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- A Legislative Council can be used to delay legislation.
- The forum is likely to be used to accommodate party functionaries who fail to get elected
- It can also be an unnecessary drain on the exchequer.
- Moreover, graduates are no longer a rarity; also, with dipping educational standards, a graduate degree is no guarantee of any real intellectual heft.

## LC vis-à-vis Rajya Sabha

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- Legislative Councils have limited legislative power.
- Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, LCs lack a constitutional mandate to do so.  
Assemblies can override suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council.
- Unlike Rajya Sabha MPs, MLCs cannot vote in elections for the President and Vice President.
- The Vice President is the Rajya Sabha Chairperson; an MLC is the Council Chairperson.

## LC vis-à-vis Legislative Assembly

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### **Equal with Assembly**

- Introduction and passage of ordinary bills. *(However, in case of disagreement between the two Houses, the will of the assembly prevails over that of the council.)*

- Approval of ordinances issued by the governor.
- Ministers including the chief minister can be from either House.
- Enlargement of the jurisdiction of the state public service commission.

### **Unequal with Assembly**

- Money Bill
  - A Money Bill can be introduced only in the assembly and not in the council.
  - The council cannot amend or reject a money bill - LC should return the bill to the assembly within 14 days.
  - The final power to decide whether a particular bill is a money bill or not is vested in the Speaker of the assembly.
- The final power of passing an ordinary bill also lies with the assembly.
- LC can only discuss the budget but cannot vote on the demands for grants.
- LC cannot remove the council of ministers by passing a no-confidence motion.
- It does not participate in the election of the president of India and representatives of the state in the Rajya Sabha.
- It has no effective say in the ratification of a constitutional amendment bill.
- The very existence of the council depends on the will of the assembly.
  - The council can be abolished by the Parliament on the recommendation of the assembly.

### **Way Forward**

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- Legislative Councils are subject to varied and inconclusive discussions around their creation, revival and abolishment. Given this, Odisha's proposal may give the country an opportunity to evolve a national consensus on Legislative Councils.
  - An intense and detailed study of Legislative Councils and their role in enriching the process
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### **REC seeks RBI nod for Pariwartan ARC**

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The government is going ahead with plans to start an asset reconstruction company (ARC) to warehouse stressed power projects and protect their value until demand for power recovers.

### **Background**

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- The country's power sector is one of the highly stressed sectors, with close to ₹1 trillion of loans turned bad. Around 66 gigawatts (GW) of capacity is facing various degrees of financial stress, including 54.8 GW of coal-based power, 6.83 GW of gas-based power and 4.57 GW of hydropower.

- The step to form an ARC follows the Allahabad high court order denying interim relief to power companies, who had challenged RBI's circular on bad loans which allowed lenders to initiate insolvency proceedings against defaulters if they fail to come up with a resolution plan within 180 days, with the deadline ending on August 27.
- To prevent their distress sale under the insolvency and bankruptcy code, state-run Rural Electrification Corp. Ltd (REC) decided to lead the process of applying to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for setting up the ARC named Power Asset Revival through Warehousing and Rehabilitation, or Pariwartan.

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## Pariwartan Scheme

- "Pariwartan will be registered with the RBI as an ARC.
- Once registered, lenders will be allowed to take out stressed assets from the liquidation route under NCLT and bring them under the asset reconstruction route.
- REC has identified projects with a total debt of around ₹1.8 trillion as part of the Pariwartan scheme.
- The scheme is for projects that do not have power purchase or fuel supply agreements or are facing lack of funds.
- The ARC will comprise borrowers, power PSUs and banks, and NTPC. They may hold stakes in the ARC and conduct operations and maintenance (O&M).
- The asset will be managed by a professional O&M agency, preferably NTPC. The Centre will support coal supply. This will ensure value preservation of the asset and cash flow to the ARC, with a potential for full or partial debt servicing.
- The asset will be auctioned once demand becomes visible. However, no asset will be held by the Pariwartan ARC for more than 60 months.
- The 'Pariwartan' scheme is inspired by the Troubled Asset Relief Programme, or TARP, which was introduced in the US during the 2008 financial crisis.

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## Important Facts for Prelims (6th September 2018)

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### Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the continuation of the Centrally Sponsored Umbrella Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH) beyond the 12th Plan period from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

- The umbrella scheme consists of Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Project Tiger (CSS-PT), Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-DWH) and Project Elephant (CSS-PE).
- The implementation of the schemes would be done through the respective States in designated Tiger Reserves, Protected Areas and Elephant Reserves.



- Under the Project Tiger, 18 tiger range States, distributed in five landscapes of the country will be benefitted.
- These schemes will result in overall strengthening/consolidation of tiger, elephant and wildlife conservation in the country.
- These schemes would generate employment opportunities resulting in economic upliftment of people in and around tiger reserves/ Protected Areas besides leading to reduction in natural resource dependency with substitution by clean energy use.
- These schemes would foster imparting various skills towards making people self-dependent through various eco-development projects, thereby enabling them to go for self-employment.
- These schemes would result in resource generation through tourist visits as well.

## Milk Fortification

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Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has urged the private and public dairy firms to start voluntary milk fortification.

- Food fortification is one of the most cost-effective and globally-recognized strategies to address micronutrient deficiencies.
- Milk fortification is a provision to add the vitamins and micronutrients to milk for addressing widespread deficiencies present in the population. Vitamins A and D are lost when milk fat is removed during processing of milk.
- Recently FSSAI notified standards for fortifying staples such as edible oil, milk, atta, maida, and salt. Concerns have been raised on costs of fortification and use of synthetic vitamins made from animal sources.

## Competition Commission of India ordered probes into hospitals

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The Competition Commission of India has said in a press release that it will probe into unfair practices adopted by Hospitals in products and services provided to in-patients.

### **Background**

- Commission ordered a Director-General level enquiry into prima-facie violation of competition act by Max Super Speciality Hospital in November, 2015.
- After DG's report that hospital has earned huge profit margins in the range of 250 to more than 500 percent in a financial year, probe was ordered.

### **The Competition Act, 2002**

The Act prohibits:

- anti-competitive agreements.
- abuse of dominant position by enterprises.
- regulates combinations (Mergers and Acquisition), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

### **Competition Commission of India**

- From the provisions under the Competition Act, 2002, the central government has established Competition Commission of India in 2003.
- CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.
- It is the duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
- The Commission also give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.

### **Jan-Dhan Yojana Made an Open-ended Scheme**

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- The Government has decided to make the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) into an open-ended scheme meaning that it will continue indefinitely and added more incentives to encourage people to open bank accounts.
  - Initially, the scheme was launched for 4 years but It has been decided to continue the flagship financial inclusion programme PMJDY with focus on opening an account from every household to every adult.
  - PMJDY is also known as the National Mission on Financial Inclusion was launched in 2014 to bring financial inclusion in India with important features like zero balance account, insurance cover, direct benefit transfers, overdraft/loan.
  - The first phase of the PMJDY scheme was focused on opening basic bank accounts and RuPay debit card with inbuilt accident insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh.
  - The second phase was planned to provide micro-insurance to the people and pension schemes to unorganized sector workers through Business Correspondents.
  - The overdraft limit has been increased to Rs. 10,000 from the existing Rs 5,000. In addition, no condition will be attached for any overdraft up to Rs 2000.
  - The accident insurance cover for new cardholders has been doubled to Rs. 2 lakh.
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