



News Analysis (01 Jun, 2021)

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Time to Define Limits of Sedition: SC

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** while protecting two Telugu (language) news channels from coercive action by the Andhra Pradesh government noted that **it is time to define the limits of sedition.**

Presently, the **Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws** constituted by the Union Home Ministry to suggest reforms to the British-era **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**, is **attempting for the first time to define Hate speech.**

Key Points

- **About the Case:**
 - Channels blamed the state government for **suppressing the right to freedom of speech** by **obstructing the media** coverage and reportage of the **Covid-19 pandemic** in the State.
 - Article 19** guarantees freedom of expressing one's own views, opinions, beliefs and convictions freely by word of mouth, writing, printing, picturing or in any other manner.
 - Channels urged the SC to **initiate contempt proceedings against the senior officials of the State government** for violating its previous order.
 - The previous order of SC directed the **state government to immediately cease any direct and indirect threats** of prosecution and arrest to citizens, who air their grievances.

- **SC's Ruling:**
 - **Indiscriminate Use of Sedition:**
 - SC flagged **indiscriminate use of the sedition law against critics, journalists, social media users, activists and citizens for airing their grievances about the government's Covid-19 management.**
 - Even for seeking help to gain medical access, equipment, drugs and oxygen cylinders, especially during the **second wave** of the pandemic.
 - **Interpretation of 'Sedition':**
 - The ambit and parameters of the provisions of **Sections 124A** (sedition), **153A** and **505** of the **IPC** would require interpretation.
 - **IPC Section 153 A:** Punishes **acts promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc,** and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.
 - **IPC Section 505:** Makes the **publication and circulation of content** which may cause ill-will or hatred between different groups an offence.
 - Particularly in the **context of the right of the electronic and print media to communicate news,** information and the rights, even those that may be critical of the **prevailing regime in any part of the nation.**
 - **Rights of Media:**

Acknowledged the argument that the **media was well within its rights to air critical programmes** about a prevailing regime without attracting sedition.

Sedition (Section 124A of IPC)

- **Sedition** is a crime under **Section 124A, IPC.**
- Section 124A, IPC **defines sedition as an offence** committed when "any person by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite **disaffection towards the government established by law in India**".
 - Disaffection includes **disloyalty and all feelings of enmity.** However, comments without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, will not constitute an offence under this section.
- **Punishment for the Offence of Sedition:**
 - Sedition is a **non-bailable offence.** Punishment under the Section 124A ranges from **imprisonment up to three years to a life term, to which fine may be added.**
 - A **person charged** under this law is **barred from a government job.**
 - They have to **live without their passport and must produce themselves in the court at all times as and when required.**

Way Forward

- Section 124A of the IPC has its **utility in combating anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements**. However, **Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of robust public debate in a vibrant democracy**. They should not be constructed as sedition.
- The higher judiciary should **use its supervisory powers to sensitize the magistracy and police to the constitutional provisions protecting free speech**.
- The **definition of sedition should be narrowed down**, to include only the issues pertaining to the territorial integrity of India as well as the sovereignty of the country.
- Civil society must take the lead to **raise awareness about the arbitrary use of Sedition law**.

Source:TH

Section 304B of IPC: Dowry Deaths

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court** (SC) has **widened the scope of section 304B of Indian Penal Code (IPC)** by indicating that **there is no straitjacket formula** to determine the cruelty against women.

Key Points

- **About Section 304B of IPC:**
 - According to Section 304B, to make out a case of dowry death, **a woman should have died of burns or other bodily injuries or “otherwise than under normal circumstances” within seven years of her marriage**.
 - She should **have suffered cruelty or harassment from her husband or in-laws “soon before her death”** in connection with demand for dowry.

- **Highlights of the Judgement:**

- Section 304B of IPC **must be interpreted keeping in mind the legislative intent to curb the social evil** of bride burning and dowry demand.
- The **court should use their discretion** to determine if the period between the cruelty or harassment and the death of the victim would come within the term **“soon before”**.
 - For such determination, an important factor is the establishment of a **“proximate and live link”** between the cruelty and the consequential death of the victim.
 - Over the years, **courts had interpreted the phrase 'soon before' in Section 304B as 'immediately before'**. This interpretation would make it necessary for a woman to have been harassed moments before she died.
- Even the **spectrum of cruelty is quite varied**, as it can range from physical, verbal or even emotional. **No straitjacket formulae** can therefore be laid down to define what exact the phrase ‘soon before’ entails.
- Further, the phrase **“otherwise than under normal circumstances”** in the section calls for a **liberal interpretation**.

Section 304-B, IPC **does not take a pigeonhole approach** in categorising death as homicidal or suicidal or accidental.

- Also, the **examination of the accused** about the incriminatory material against him **should be done in a fair manner**.

However, there is a **need to balance** other important considerations such as the **right to a speedy trial**.

- **Reports on Dowry Death:**

- Dowry deaths **accounted for 40% to 50% homicides** in the country for almost a decade from 1999 to 2018.
- In 2019 alone, 7,115 cases of dowry death were registered under Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code.

Dowry

- The term **dowry has not been defined in IPC** but in **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**. According to the act, it has been defined **as any property or valuable security given or agreed** to be given directly or indirectly:
 - By one party to a marriage to the other party to a marriage or
 - By the parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person to either party to the marriage or any other person at or before or any time after (on three occasions) the marriage in connection with the marriage of the said parties.
- However, **customary payments** as are prevalent in different societies, such as at the time of birth of child etc, **are not covered** within dowry.
- **Giving & taking dowry both** are offences.

- In addition to the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, the **laws have been made more stringent** namely,
 - **Section 304B (dowry death)** and **Section 498A (cruelty by husband or his relatives)** have been integrated into the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**.
 - **Section 113 B (presumption as to dowry death)** has been made part of the **Indian Evidence Act (I.E.A.)** so as to eradicate or at-least lower down this heinous act of dowry system and related deaths.

Source: TH

Horticulture Cluster Development Programme

Why in News

The **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** has launched the **Horticulture Cluster Development Programme (CDP)** in order to **promote the export of horticultural produce**.

Horticulture is the branch of plant agriculture dealing with garden crops, generally fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants.

Key Points

Cluster Development Programme (CDP):

- **About:**

It is a **central sector programme** aimed at growing and developing identified horticulture clusters to make them globally competitive.

Horticulture cluster is a regional/geographical concentration of targeted horticulture crops.

- **Implementation:**

- It will be implemented by the **National Horticulture Board (NHB)** of the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare**.

- In a **pilot phase**, the programme will be **implemented in 12 horticulture clusters out of the total 53 clusters** selected for the programme.

These clusters will be implemented through **Cluster Development Agencies (CDAs)** which are appointed on the recommendations of the respective State/UT Government.

- **Objectives:**

- To address all **major issues related** to the **Indian horticulture sector** including pre-production, production, post-harvest management, logistics, marketing and branding.

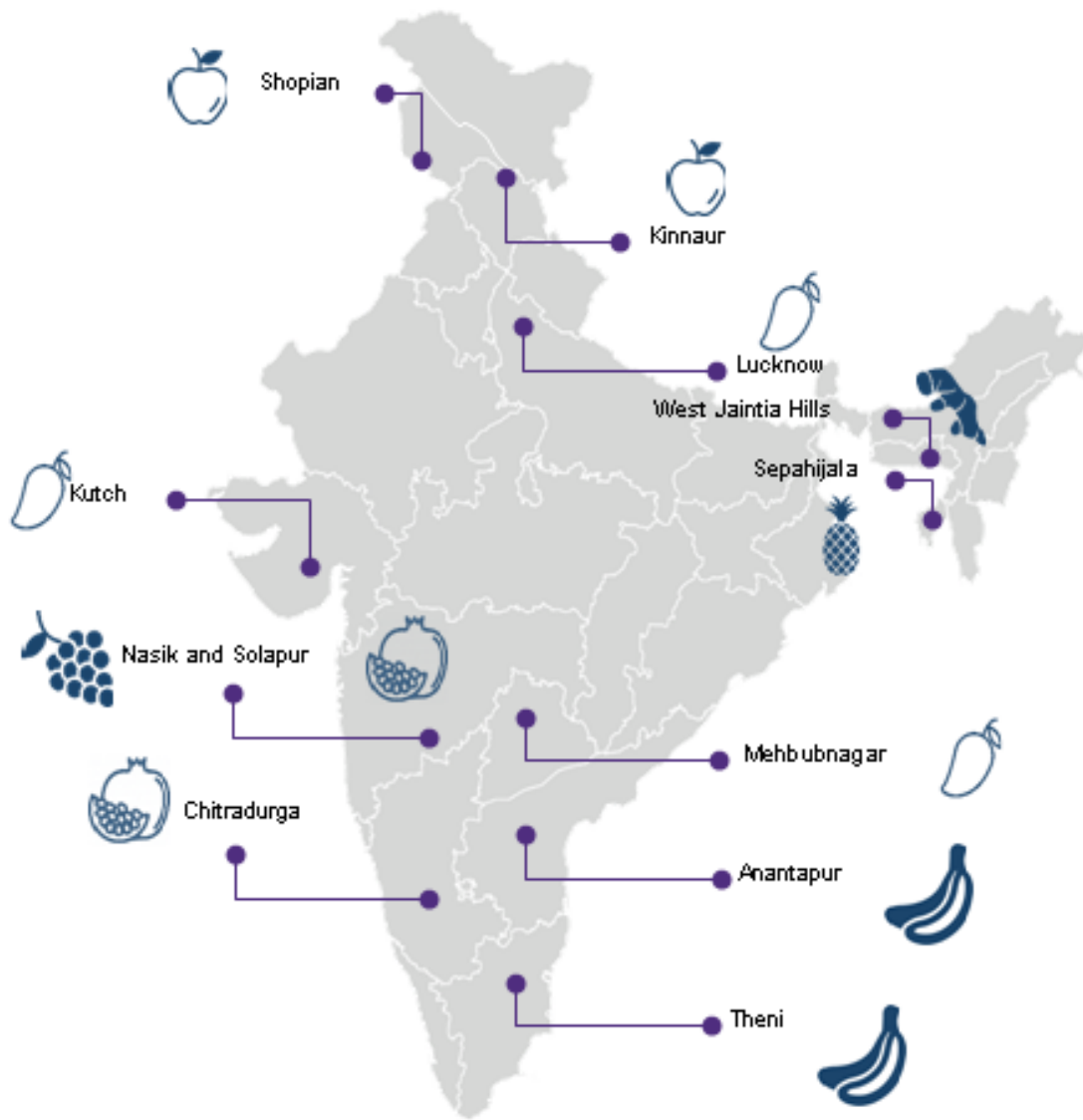
- To leverage **geographical specialisation** and promote integrated and market-led development of horticulture clusters.

- To converge with other initiatives of the Government such as the **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund**.

- **Expected Benefit:**

The programme will benefit about **10 lakh farmers** and is expected to attract **an investment of Rs. 10,000 crore** when implemented in all the 53 clusters.

Identified Crops and Clusters in the Pilot Phase



Horticulture Sector in India:

- **India is the second-largest producer of horticulture crops globally**, accounting for approximately 12% of the world's production of fruits and vegetables.
 - India is a leader in producing fruits like Mango, Banana, Pomegranate, Sapota, Acid Lime and Aonla.
- In 2018-19, **Andhra Pradesh followed by Maharashtra and UP** were the **top states in fruit production**.
 - West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh** were the **top States in vegetable production**.
- The **area under horticulture crops increased to 25.5 million hectare in 2018-19**, which is 20% of the total area under foodgrain, and produced 314 million tonnes.
- **Recent steps taken for this sector:**
 - The Ministry has provided an enhanced allocation of **Rs. 2250 Crore** for the year **2021-22** for **'Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture' (MIDH)**.
 - **MIDH** is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.

Way Forward

- There is tremendous scope for enhancing the productivity of Indian horticulture which is imperative to cater to the **country's estimated demand of 650 Million MT of fruits and vegetables by the year 2050**.
- Some of the new initiatives like focus on planting material production, cluster development programme, credit push through **Agri Infra Fund**, formation and promotion of **FPOs (Farmers Producer Organisations)** are the right steps in this direction.

Source: PIB

World No Tobacco Day

Why in News

Every year, on **31st May**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and global partners celebrate **World No Tobacco Day (WNTD)**.

Key Points

- **Focus of WNTD 2021:**

- The **theme** for the World No Tobacco Day **2021** is “**Commit to Quit**”.
- The **WHO** has honoured Indian Union health minister **Harsh Vardhan** with **Director-General Special award** for his efforts to control tobacco consumption in India.

His leadership was instrumental in the **2019 national legislation** to ban **E-cigarettes & heated tobacco** products.

- **Socio Economic Burden of ‘Tobacco’:**

- In India, **over 1.3 million deaths** are attributable to tobacco use every year amounting to 3500 deaths per day, imposing a lot of avoidable socio-economic burden.
- **In addition to the death and diseases** it causes, tobacco **also impacts the economic development** of the country.

Smokers face a 40-50% higher risk of developing **severe disease deaths** from **Covid-19**.

- As per the **WHO study** (Published in August 2020) titled “**Economic Costs of Diseases and Deaths Attributable to Tobacco Use in India**”.

It has been estimated that the **economic burden of diseases and deaths attributable to use of tobacco** in India was as high as **Rs. 1.77 lakh crores**, amounting to **approx 1% of GDP**.

- **Measures towards tobacco control in India:**

- **India adopted the** tobacco control provisions under **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)**.
- **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003:**
 - It replaced the **Cigarettes Act of 1975** (largely limited to statutory warnings- ‘Cigarette Smoking is Injurious to Health’ to be displayed on cigarette packs and advertisements. It **did not include non-cigarettes**).
 - The **2003 Act also included** cigars, bidis, cheroots, pipe tobacco, hookah, chewing tobacco, pan masala, and gutka.
- **Promulgation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Ordinance, 2019:** Which **prohibits** Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement of **e-Cigarettes**.
- **National Tobacco Quitline Services (NTQLS):** Tobacco Quitline Services have the potential to reach a large number of tobacco users with the sole objective to provide telephone-based information, advice, support, and referrals for tobacco cessation.
- **mCessation Programme:** It is an initiative using mobile technology for tobacco cessation.

India launched mCessation using text messages in 2016 as part of the government’s **Digital India initiative**.

- **Decline in Tobacco Consumption:**
 - The prevalence of tobacco use has decreased by **six percentage points** from **34.6% in 2009-10** to **28.6% in 2016-17**.
 - Under the **National Health Policy 2017**, India has set an ambitious target of **reducing tobacco use by 30% by 2025**.

WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

- Governments adopt and implement the tobacco control provisions of the **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)**.
- It is the first international treaty negotiated under the **auspices of the WHO**.
- It was adopted by the **World Health Assembly** (apex decision making body of WHO) on **21st May 2003** and entered into force on **27th February 2005**.
- It was developed in **response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic and is an evidence-based treaty** that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health.
- The **FCTC's** measures to combat tobacco use include:
 - **Price and tax** measures.
 - **Large, graphic warnings** on tobacco packages.
 - **100% smoke-free** public spaces.
 - **A ban** on tobacco marketing.
 - Support for **smokers** who want to quit.
 - Prevention of **tobacco industry** interference.

Source: PIB

EPFO and ESIC Extension To Covid-Hit Families

Why in News

Recently, the government has announced an **extension of pension coverage** and **insurance benefits** for families of those who died due to **Covid-19**.

The pension coverage will be extended under the **Employees' state Insurance Corporation of India (ESIC) scheme** and insurance benefits under the **Employees' Deposit-Linked Insurance (EDLI) scheme** for members registered under the **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)**.

Key Points

- **Extension of Benefits Under ESIC Scheme:**

- **All dependent family** members of such persons (who died of Covid) will be eligible for a pension **equivalent to 90%** of the average daily wage drawn by the worker as per the existing rules.

This benefit will be available retrospectively with effect **from 24th March 2020 till 24th March 2022.**

- The eligibility conditions for the **ESIC** benefits are likely to include the norm that the insured person must have been registered on the **ESIC online portal** at least **three months prior** to the diagnosis of **Covid resulting in death**, the insured person must have been employed for wages and contributions for **at least 78 days.**

- **Under EPFO-EDLI:**

- The maximum insurance benefit has been increased to **Rs 7 lakh from Rs 6 lakh.**
- The **provision of minimum** insurance benefit of **Rs 2.5 lakh** has been restored and it will apply retrospectively from February 2020 for the next three years.
- Benefits are being made available to families of **even those employees** who may have changed jobs in the **last 12 months preceding his/her death.**
- All surviving dependent family members of **EPFO** are eligible to avail **benefits of EDLI** in case of death of the member.

About 6.53 crore families are expected to be eligible.

Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Scheme

- **About:**

- It is a multidimensional social system which provides **socio-economic protection** to the **worker population** and immediate dependent or family covered under the **ESI scheme.**
- **The ESI** is an integrated measure of **social Insurance** embodied in the **Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948.**

- **Coverage:**

- **ESI Act applies** to all factories and notified establishments located in implemented areas **employing 10 or more persons** and is applicable on employees drawing wages up to **Rs 21,000 per month (Rs 25,000 for persons with disabilities).**
- It covers about **3.49 crore of family** units of workers and provides cash benefits and medical facilities to **13.56 crore beneficiaries.**

Employees' Deposit-Linked Insurance

- It is an insurance cover provided by the EPFO for **private sector salaried employees**. It was **launched in 1976**.
Any employee who has an **EPF account** automatically becomes eligible for the **EDLI** scheme.
- The registered nominee receives a lump-sum payment in the event of the death of the person insured, during the period of the service.
It applies to **all organisations registered under the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952**.
- The **EDLI** scheme is managed on the basis of **0.5%** of monthly wages **paid by the employer** to the fund and there is no employee contribution. The nominee registered by the employee is eligible to claim the benefit under the scheme.

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation

- It is a government organization that manages provident fund and pension accounts for the workforce engaged in the organized sector in India.
- It implements the **Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952**.
The Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 provides for the institution of provident funds for employees in **factories and other establishments**.
- It is administered by the **Ministry of Labour & Employment**, Government of India.

Employees' Provident Funds Scheme

- **EPF** is the main scheme under the **Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Act, 1952**.
- It offers the institution of provident funds for factory employees and other establishments.
- The **employee and employer** each contribute **12% of the employee's** basic salary and dearness allowance **towards EPF**.
The **Economic Survey 2016-17** had suggested that employees be allowed to choose whether or not to save 12% of their salary into EPF or keep it as take home pay.
- As per **current laws**, a person mandatorily becomes a member of **EPF** if his monthly salary does not **exceed Rs. 15,000**.

Source: IE

Disinfection System Vajra Kavach

Why in News

Vajra Kavach is a simple disinfection process that enables Corona Warriors to **reuse their masks and PPEs**.

The technology has been developed under the **NIDHI-PRAYAS** program initiated by the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**.



Key Points

- **About Vajra Kavach:**
 - Vajra Kavach's **UV (Ultra Violet)** disinfection system **removes any possible traces of the disease-causing SARS-Cov-2 (Covid-19) virus** from **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), N95 masks, coats, gloves and gowns**.
 - It **enables reuse** of PPEs and other materials used by healthcare workers.
It thus protects not only them, but our environment too, by **helping reduce biomedical waste generation**. It is also making personal protective equipment more available, affordable, and accessible.

- **NIDHI-PRAYAS:**

- NIDHI-PRAYAS is **National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovation PRomoting and Accelerating Young and aspiring Innovators & startups.**
- The **Department of Science & Technology** has launched a **NIDHI** program under which programmes for setting up of **incubators, seed fund, accelerators** and **‘Proof of concept’ grants** for innovators and entrepreneurs have been launched.
 - Under **NIDHI, PRAYAS** programme has been initiated in which established **Technology Business Incubators (TBI)** are supported with **PRAYAS grant** to support innovators and entrepreneurs with grants for **‘Proof of Concept (PoC)’** and developing prototypes.
 - **PoC** is evidence that a business idea works.
- A maximum grant of **Rs. 220 lakh** is given to a **TBI** for establishing a **PRAYAS Centre** which includes **Rs.100 lakh for PRAYAS SHALA, Rs. 20 lakh** for operational cost of **PRAYAS Centre** and maximum of **Rs. 10 lakh** to one innovator for developing prototype. Funding for ten innovators is given to the TBI in a year.
- **Objectives:**
 - To enable translation of an innovative idea to a prototype.
 - To provide a platform for faster experimentation and modify approaches in the idea to market journey.
 - To generate innovative solutions relevant to local and global problems.
 - To attract a large number of youth who demonstrate problem solving zeal and abilities.
 - To work on their new technology/knowledge/innovation based startups.
 - To enhance the pipeline in terms of quality and quantity of innovative startups to the incubators.

Source: PIB

AmbiTAG

Why in News

Recently, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Ropar, Punjab has developed a **first-of-its-kind IoT (Internet of Things) device – AmbiTag** that records **real-time ambient temperature** during the **transportation of perishable products, vaccines** and even **body organs and blood.**

The device has been developed under **Technology Innovation Hub – AWaDH (Agriculture and Water Technology Development Hub)** and it's Startup **ScratchNest**.

Agriculture and Water Technology Development Hub

AWaDH is a research center at **IIT Ropar** established with support from the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** and **Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)** to carry out extensive research in the **field of agriculture and water**.

Key Points

- **About AmbiTAG:**
 - This is **shaped as a USB (Universal Serial Bus) device**.
 - It is **India's first indigenous** temperature data logger for **cold chain management**.
 - It continuously records the temperature of its immediate surroundings **from -40 to +80 degrees in any time zone for a full 90 days on a single charge**.
 - Most of the similar devices available in the international market record data only for a duration of 30- 60 days.
 - It **generates an alert** when the temperature goes **beyond a pre-set limit**.
 - The recorded data can be retrieved by **connecting the USB** with any computer.
- **Significance:**
 - Besides **perishable items** including **vegetables, meat and dairy products**, it can also monitor the temperature of **animal semen** during transit.
 - The device will be made available to all companies involved in **Covid-19** vaccine transportation from production facilities to the last mile vaccination centers in the country.
 - It is a push towards **Atmanirbhar Bharat** as such devices are being imported by India in a massive quantity from other countries such as **Singapore, Hong Kong, Ireland, and China**.

Source: PIB

Nano Urea Liquid: IFFCO

Why in News

Recently, the **Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO)** introduced the **world's first Nano Urea Liquid** for farmers across the world.

Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited

- **About:**
 - It is **one of India's biggest cooperative societies** which is **wholly owned by Indian Cooperatives**.
 - **Founded in 1967** with just 57 cooperatives, today it is an amalgamation of over 36,000 Indian Cooperatives with **diversified business interests ranging from General Insurance to Rural Telecom** apart from its core business of manufacturing and selling fertilisers.
- **Objective:**

To **enable Indian farmers to prosper through timely supply of reliable, high quality agricultural inputs and services** in an environmentally sustainable manner and to undertake other activities to improve their welfare.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is a **nutrient (liquid) to provide nitrogen to plants** as an alternative to the conventional urea.
 - It is **developed to replace conventional urea** and it can **curtail the requirement of the same by at least 50%**.
 - It contains 40,000 mg/L of nitrogen in a 500 ml bottle which is **equivalent to the impact of nitrogen nutrient provided by one bag of conventional urea**.
 - **Conventional urea is effective 30-40%** in delivering nitrogen to plants, while the effectiveness of the **Nano Urea Liquid is over 80%**.
 - Its **effectiveness** has been tested in over **11,000 farmers' fields for 94 crops like rice and wheat**.
 - An average **8% increase in yield** has been witnessed.
- **Developed At:**

It has been **indigenously** developed at **Nano Biotechnology Research Centre, Kalol, Gujrat** in line with **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and **Atmanirbhar Krishi**.
India is **dependent on imports** to meet its **urea requirements**.

- **Significance:**
 - **Improves Plant Nutrition:**
 - It has been found effective and efficient for plant nutrition which **increases the production with improved nutritional quality.**
 - It will **boost a balanced nutrition program by reducing the excess use of Urea application** in the soil and will make the crops stronger, healthier and protect them from **lodging effect.**
 - Lodging** is the bending over of the stems near ground level of grain crops, which makes them very difficult to harvest, and can **dramatically reduce yield.**
 - **Improves Environment:**

It will also have a **huge positive impact on the quality of underground water**, a very **significant reduction in global warming** with an **impact on climate change and sustainable development.**
 - **Increase Farmers' Income:**

It is easy on the pocket of farmers and will be effective in **increasing farmers' income.** It will also significantly **bring down the cost of logistics and warehousing.**

Source:IE
