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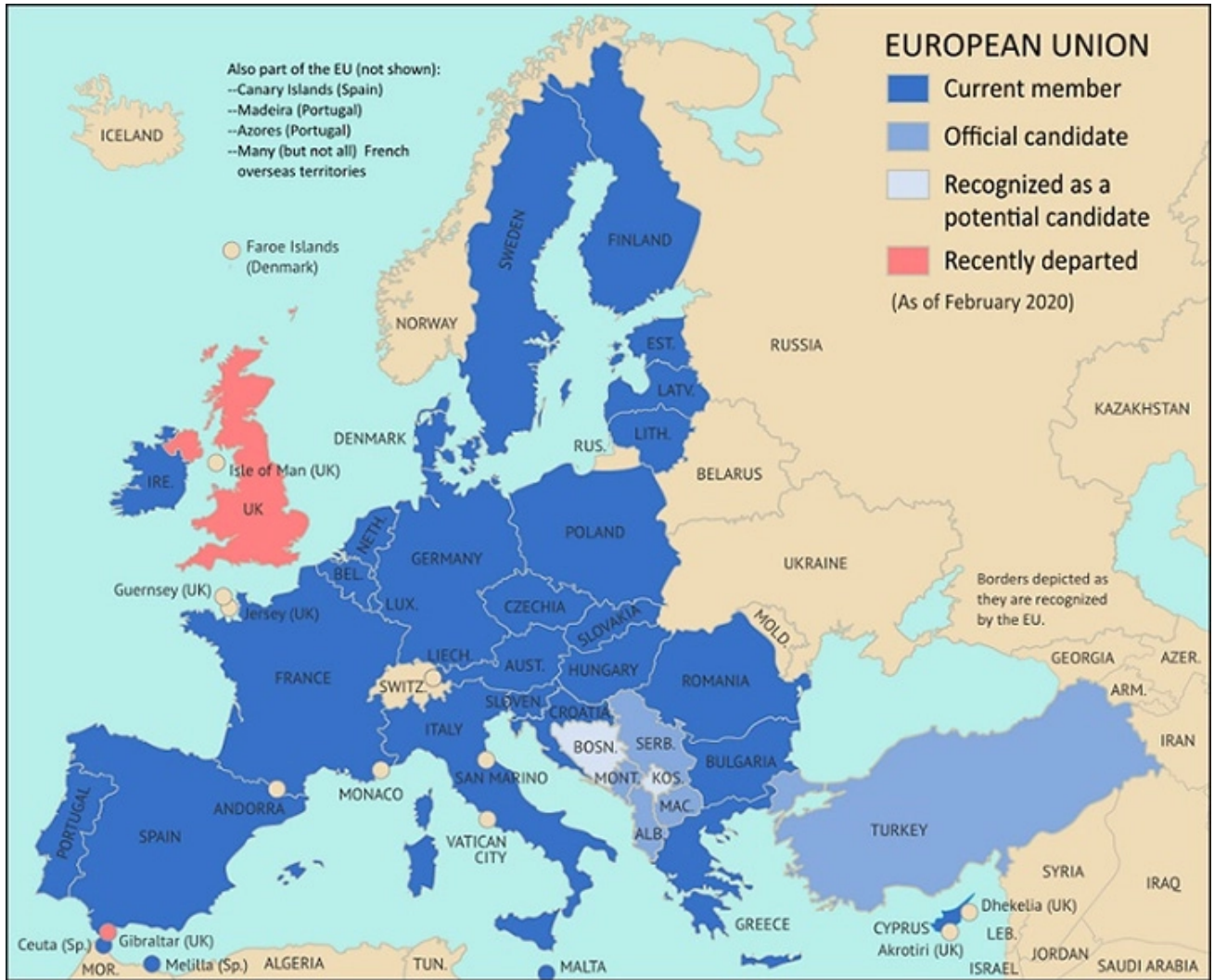
India-EU Meet on Agriculture

Why in News

Recently, a Virtual meeting between **India's Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** and a **Member of the European Commission (EC), Agriculture** was held.

- The strong momentum of the India-European Union (EU) relations especially since the last **India-EU Summit in July, 2020** was acknowledged.
- Earlier, Indian Prime Minister participated in the **India-European Union (EU) Leaders' Meeting**.

Key Points



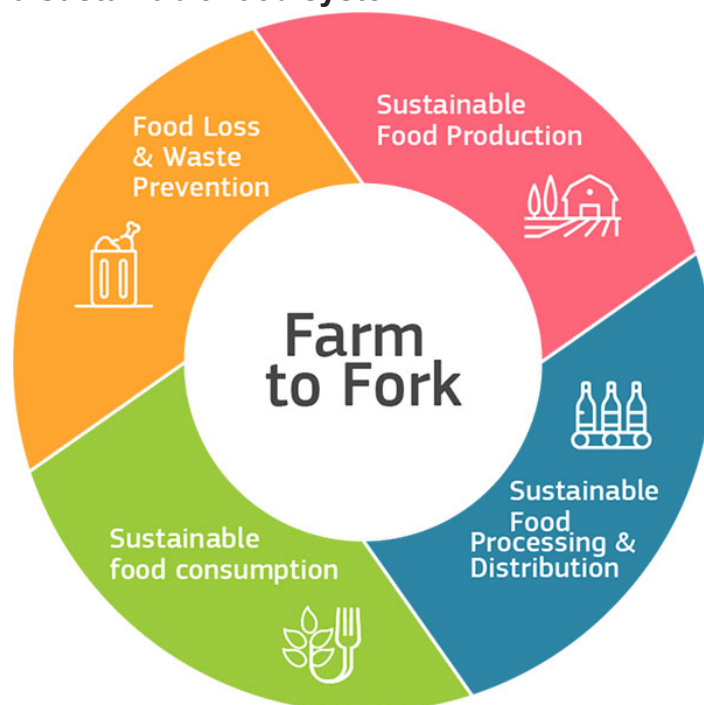
- **Major Discussions:**

- **EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):**

- **Launched in 1962**, it is a **partnership between agriculture and society, and between Europe and its farmers.**
- It is a **common policy for all EU countries.** It is managed and funded at European level from the resources of the EU's budget.
- It aims to support farmers, improve agricultural productivity, ensure a stable supply of affordable food, safeguard EU farmers, tackle **climate change** and the sustainable management of natural resources etc.

- **EU Farm to Fork Strategy:**

- It is at the heart of the European Green Deal aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly. It aims to **accelerate transition to a sustainable food system.**



- Reforms were undertaken by the EU in the CAP as well as the **Farm to Fork Strategy** to make agriculture green as well as sustainable.

The EU has also set a **target of bringing 25% of the area in the EU under Organic Farming by 2030.**

- **G20 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting 2021:**

- It is one of the ministerial meetings organized as part of the **G20** Leaders Summit 2021, which will be hosted by Italy in October 2021.
- It will **focus on three broad, interconnected pillars of action: People, Planet, Prosperity.**
- Both India-EU are looking forward to bilateral cooperation at the summit.

- **United Nations Food System Summit 2021.**
 - The **United Nations (UN)** Secretary General has called for the first ever **UN Food Systems Summit to be held in September 2021** to strategize the actions for positive change in Agri-food systems in the world to realize the vision of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.
 - The EU and India are looking forward to strengthening their cooperation at the summit.
- **India's Stand:**
 - **Dominance of Small Farmers:**

70% of its rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with **82% of farmers being small and marginal**.
 - **Highlighted the recent initiatives to Increase Farmers Income:**
 - **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund** with a corpus of Rs One Lakh Crore for development of farm gate and agriculture marketing infrastructure in rural areas.
 - **Scheme of formation of 10000 Farmer Produce Organizations (FPOs)** to help small and marginal farmers in marketing of agricultural produce.
 - **Explained Steps to Make Agriculture Sustainable and Environment Friendly:**
 - Encouragement of application of **Nano-urea**.
 - **Organic Farming** under the **Pramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana**.
 - **Maximum Residual Limit (MRL) of Tricyclazole:**

Raised the issue of fixing the **Maximum Residual Limit (MRL)** of **Tricyclazole** used in rice crop which has been a concern for India and is **affecting India's Basmati Rice Exports to the EU**.

 - The **MRL** is the **maximum concentration for a pesticide on a crop or food commodity** resulting from the use of pesticide according to Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), which is expressed in ppm.
 - **Tricyclazole** is a fungicide used for the control of rice blast but it is not approved for use in the EU.

European Commission (EC)

- **About:**
 - It is an **executive body of the EU**, responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the EU treaties and managing the day-to-day business of the EU.
 - The EU is a group of 27 countries that operate as a cohesive economic and political block.
 - The Commission is **divided into departments known as Directorates-General (DGs)** that can be likened to departments or ministries headed by a director-general who is responsible to a commissioner.

- **Structure:**
 - It **operates as a cabinet government**, with 28 members of the Commission. There is one member per member state. These members are proposed by member countries and European Parliament gives final approval to them.
 - **One of the 28 members is the Commission President** proposed by the European Council and **elected by the European Parliament**.

Way Forward

- India can pursue EU countries to **engage in Indo-pacific narrative, geo-economically if not from a security prism**.
It can **mobilise massive economic resources for sustainable development of regional infrastructure**, wield political influence and leverage its significant soft power to shape the Indo-Pacific discourse.
- India and the European Union have been negotiating a free trade deal, but it is pending since 2007.
Therefore, for **closer convergence between India and the EU, both should engage in finalisation of the trade deal as soon as possible**.

Source: PIB

Central Information Commission (CIC)

Why in News

The **Supreme Court** has directed the **Union of India and all States** to file status reports on the latest developments regarding **vacancies and pendency** in the **Central Information Commission (CIC) and State Information Commissions (SICs)**.

Key Points

- **About Central Information Commission (CIC):**
 - **Establishment:** The CIC was **established by the Central Government in 2005**, under the provisions of the **Right to Information Act (2005)**. It is **not a constitutional body**.
 - **Members:** It consists of a **Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information Commissioners**.
 - **Appointment:** They are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the **Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister**.
 - **Jurisdiction:** The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities.
 - **Tenure:** The Chief Information Commissioner and an Information Commissioner shall hold office for such term as prescribed by the **Central Government or until they attain the age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.
They are **not eligible for reappointment**.
 - **Power and Functions of CIC:**
 - To **receive and inquire into a complaint from any person** regarding information requested under RTI, 2005.
 - It can **order an inquiry into any matter** if there are reasonable grounds (suo-moto power).
 - While inquiring, the Commission has the powers of a **civil court in respect of summoning, requiring documents etc.**
- **State Information Commission:**
 - It is constituted by the **State Government**.
 - It has **one State Chief Information Commissioner (SCIC) and not more than 10 State Information Commissioners (SIC)** to be appointed by the **Governor** on the recommendation of the **Appointments Committee headed by the Chief Minister**.

- **Issues:**
 - **Delays and Backlogs:**
 - On average, the CIC **takes 388 days (more than one year)** to dispose of an appeal/complaint from the date it was filed before the commission.
 - A report released last year has pointed out that **more than 2.2 lakh Right to information cases are pending** at the Central and State Information Commissions (ICs).
 - **No Penalties:**
 - The report found that the Government officials hardly face any punishment for violating the law.
 - Penalties were **imposed in only 2.2% of cases** that were disposed of, despite previous analysis showing a rate of about 59% violations which should have triggered the process of penalty imposition
 - **Vacancy:**

Despite repeated directions from the court, there are still **three vacancies in the CIC.**
 - **Lack of Transparency:**

The criteria of selection, etc, nothing has been placed on record.

Right to Information Act

- Genesis of RTI law started in 1986, through judgement of Supreme Court in **Mr. Kulwal v/s Jaipur Municipal Corporation** case, in which it directed that freedom of speech and expression provided under **Article 19** of the Constitution clearly implies Right to Information, as without information the freedom of speech and expression cannot be fully used by the citizens
- It has been implemented in order to see that the **Indian citizens are enabled to exercise their rights to ask some pertinent questions** to the Government and different public utility service providers in a practical way.
- The RTI Act replaced the **Freedom of Information Act 2002.**
- The objective of this act was to **help the citizens avail of quicker services from the government agencies** since the act enables them to ask questions like why a particular application or an official proceeding gets delayed.
- Mainly the act aims at achieving a **corruption-free India.**

Information that can be sought

- **Any Indian citizen is free to seek answers** from a Government Authority like applying for a delayed IT refund, driving license or passport, or details of a repair or infrastructure project completed or going on.
- Information sought can also be related to the funds allotted under the different kinds of relief funds in the country.
- The act enables students to get copies of answer sheets from the universities under this act.

Way Forward

- Democracy is all about the **governance of the people, by the people and for the people**. In order to achieve the third paradigm, the state needs to start acknowledging the importance of an informed public and the role that it plays in the country's development as a nation. In this context, **underlying issues related to RTI Act should be resolved**, so that it can serve the information needs of society.
- The **role of information commissions is crucial especially during Covid-19** to ensure that people can obtain information on healthcare facilities, social security programs and delivery of essential goods and services meant for those in distress.
- By its 2019 order, the apex court had passed a slew of directions to the Central and State governments to fill vacancies across Central and State Information Commissions in a transparent and timely manner.
- **Urgent digitization of records and proper record management** is important as lack of remote access to records in the lockdown has been widely cited as the reason for not being able to conduct hearings of appeals and complaints by commissions.

Source: TH

ICDS Survey in Jharkhand

Why in News

According to a recent survey, **more than 55% did not receive Supplementary Nutrition under Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in Jharkhand** even once in the first six months of 2021.

Key Points

- **Vulnerability of Jharkhand:**
As per **National Family Health Survey-4 data, every second child in the state is stunted and underweight** and every third child is affected by stunting and **every 10th child** is affected from **severe wasting** and around **70% children are anemic**.

- **ICDS:**

- **About:**

The **Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** is a **centrally sponsored scheme** implemented by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**. It was **launched in 1975**.

- **Six Schemes under Umbrella ICDS:**
 - **Anganwadi Services Scheme:**
 - It is a unique programme **for early childhood care and development.**
 - The **beneficiaries** under the Scheme are **children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.**
 - It provides a **package of six services** namely **supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education, nutrition & health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services.**
 - **Supplementary Nutrition** includes Take Home Ration (THR), Hot Cooked Meal and morning snacks and holds importance for many vulnerable households as it impacts the nutritional outcome of the children.
 - **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:**

It provides **cash incentive amounting to Rs.5,000/- in three installments** directly to the Bank/Post Office Account of Pregnant Women and Lactating Mother (PW&LM) in **DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) Mode** during pregnancy and lactation in response to individual fulfilling specific conditions.
 - **National Creche Scheme:**
 - It provides **day care facilities to children of age group of 6 months to 6 years of working women.**
 - The facilities are provided for **seven and half hours a day for 26 days in a month.**
 - Children are provided with supplementary nutrition, early childcare education, and health and sleeping facilities.
 - **Scheme for Adolescent Girls:**
 - It aims at **out of school girls in the age group 11-14**, to empower and improve their social status through nutrition, life skills and home skills.
 - The scheme has **nutritional and non nutritional components** which include nutrition; iron and folic acid supplementation; health check up and referral service; nutrition and health education; mainstreaming out of school girls to join formal schooling bridge course/ skill training; life skill education, home management etc.,; counselling/ guidance on accessing public services.
 - **Child Protection Scheme:**

It aims to **contribute to the improvement and well-being of children in difficult circumstances**, as well as, reduction of vulnerabilities to situations and actions that lead to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and separation of children from parents.

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:**

It targets to **reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies** by reducing mal-nutrition/undernutrition, anemia among **young children** as also, **focus on adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.**

- **Objectives of ICDS:**

- To improve the **nutritional and health status of children** in the age-group **0-6 years.**
- To lay the foundation for **proper psychological, physical and social development** of the child.
- To reduce the **incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout.**
- To achieve **effective coordination of policy and implementation** amongst the various departments to promote child development.
- To enhance the **capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child.**
- To **facilitate, educate and empower Adolescent Girls (AGs)** so as to enable them to become self-reliant and aware citizens.

Other Similar Government Schemes

- **National Health Mission (NHM):**

- Launched in 2013, it subsumed the **National Rural Health Mission and the National Urban Health Mission.**
- It is being **implemented by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.**
- The main programmatic components include health system strengthening in rural and urban areas for - **Reproductive-Maternal- Neonatal-Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A)**, and **Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases.**

- **Mid Day Meal Scheme:**

- It was launched in 1995 as a **centrally sponsored scheme.**
- It provides that **every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII** who enrolls and attends the school shall be provided with a **hot cooked meal, free of charge every day except on school holidays.**
- It comes under the **Education Ministry's Department of School Education and Literacy.**

- **National Nutrition Strategy:**

- The Strategy **aims to reduce all forms of undernutrition by 2030**, with a focus on the most vulnerable and critical age groups.
- It also **aims to assist in achieving the targets identified as part of the Sustainable Development Goals** related to nutrition and health.
- It has been released by the **NITI Aayog.**

Source: IE

Authorised Economic Operators Programme

Why in News

The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)** has inaugurated the online filing of **Authorised Economic Operators (AEO)** applications.

The web application is designed to ensure continuous real-time and digital monitoring of physically filed AEO applications for timely intervention and expedience.

Key Points

- **About:**

- AEO is a programme (2007) under the aegis of the **World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework** of Standards to **secure and facilitate global trade**.
- It aims to **enhance international supply chain security** and **facilitate the movement** of goods.
- Under this, an entity engaged in international trade is **approved by WCO** as compliant with supply chain security standards and **granted AEO status**.
- An entity with an **AEO status is considered a ‘secure’ trader** and a reliable trading partner.

Benefits of AEO status include **expedited clearance times, fewer examinations, improved security and communication between supply chain partners**.

- AEO is a **voluntary programme**.

- **Indian AEO Programme:**

- The AEO Programme was introduced **as a pilot project in 2011**.
- The security standards detailed in WCO SAFE Framework are the basis of the Indian AEO programme.
- There is a **three tier AEO Status** for Exporters and Importers. The three tiers are AEO T1, AEO T2, AEO T3, where AEO T3 is the highest level of accreditation.

- **Aim of Indian AEO Programme:**

- To provide business entities with an internationally recognized certification.
- To recognize business entities as “secure and reliable” trading partners.
- To incentivize business entities through defined benefits that translate into savings in time and cost.
- Secure supply chain from point of export to import.
- Enhanced border clearance.
- Reduction in dwell time and related costs.
- Customs advice/assistance if trade faces unexpected issues with Customs of countries.

- **Benefits:**

- **Safe and Compliant Business:** Worldwide recognition as safe, secure and compliant business partners in international trade.
- **Reciprocal Recognition:** India gets trade facilitation by a foreign country with whom India enters into a **Mutual Recognition Agreement/Arrangement (MRA)**.
MRA is an international agreement by which two or more countries agree to recognize one another's conformity assessment results (for example **certifications or test results**).
- **Streamline Cargo security:** It enables Indian Customs to enhance and streamline cargo security through close cooperation with the principal stakeholders of the international supply chain viz. importers, exporters, logistics providers, custodians or terminal operators, custom brokers and warehouse operators.
- **Promote Ease of Doing Business:** A liberalized, simplified and rationalized AEO accreditation process has potential to promote **Ease of Doing Business** and to emulate global best practices.
- Facility of **Direct Port Delivery of import Containers** and/or **Direct Port Entry of Export Containers**.
It also fast tracking of refunds and adjudications.
- The Indian AEO Programme is a **game-changer**. It will not only achieve '**Make in India**' but also substantially add to the vision and lead India to become a manufacturing and exporting power-house.

World Customs Organisation

- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an **independent intergovernmental body** whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- At present, it represents **183 Customs administrations** across the globe that collectively process approximately **98% of world trade**.
- **India** had become the **vice-chair** (regional head) of the Asia Pacific region of the WCO for a period of **two years to June, 2020**.
- It is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and which can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- It has its **headquarters in Brussels, Belgium**.

SAFE Framework

- In June 2005 the WCO Council adopted the Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework) that would act as a **deterrent to international terrorism, to secure revenue collections** and to **promote trade facilitation worldwide**.

- The SAFE Framework has emerged as the global Customs community's concerted response to **threats to supply chain security**, equally supporting facilitation of **legitimate and secure businesses**.
- It prescribes baseline standards that have been tested and are working well around the globe.

Source:PIB

GI Certified Bhalia Wheat: Gujarat

Why in News

Recently, the first shipment of **Geographical Indication (GI)** certified **Bhalia variety of wheat** was exported to Kenya and Sri Lanka from **Gujarat**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The Bhalia variety of wheat **received GI certification in July, 2011**.
 - This Wheat has **high protein content and is sweet** in taste.
 - This crop is **grown mostly across the Bhal region of Gujarat** which includes Ahmedabad, Anand, Kheda, Bhavanagar, Surendranagar, Bharuch districts.
 - This variety is **grown in the rainfed condition without irrigation**.
- **Other GI products from Gujarat are:**

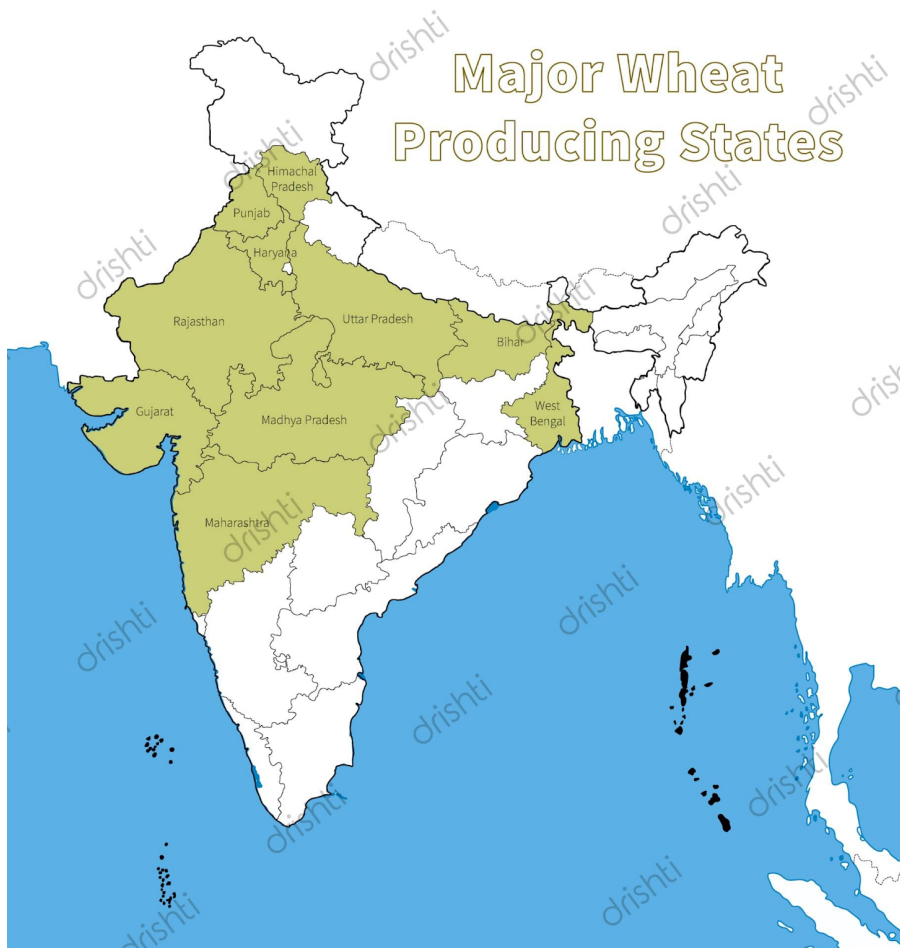
Latest is the **wooden printing blocks of Pethapur** and others are, **furniture made in Sankheda, agates from Khambhat**, Kutch embroidery, zari craft from Surat, patola from Patan, bandhani from Jamnagar, and Kesar mangoes from Gir.

- **Geographical Indication Status:**

- GI is an indication used to **identify goods having special characteristics originating from a definite geographical territory.**
 - It is used **for agricultural, natural and manufactured goods.**
- The **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
 - The Act is **administered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs and TradeMarks**- who is the Registrar of Geographical Indications.
 - The Geographical Indications **Registry is located at Chennai.**
- The registration of a geographical indication is **valid for a period of 10 years.** It can be **renewed from time to time** for a further period of 10 years each.
- It is also a part of the **World Trade Organisation's** Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- **Recent Examples:** Jharkhand's Sohrai Khovar painting, Telangana's Telia Rumal, Tirur Vetilla (Kerala), Dindigul Lock and Kandangi Saree (Tamil Nadu), Odisha Rasagola, Shahi Litchi (Bihar), etc.
- **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority** (APEDA - Ministry of Commerce and Industry) has a focus on promotion of exports of GI products.
 - Recently, a consignment of Dahanu Gholvad sapota was exported from **Maharashtra's** Palghar district.

Wheat

- **Rabi Crop:** It is **sown in October-December** and **harvested during April-June.**
- **Temperature:** Between **10-15°C (Sowing time)** and **21-26°C (Ripening & Harvesting)** with bright sunlight.
- **Rainfall:** Around 75-100 cm.
- **Soil Type:** Well-drained fertile **loamy and clayey loamy** (Ganga-Satluj plains and black soil region of the Deccan).
- **Major wheat growing states** in India are Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Gujarat.
 - India is the **second largest producer** after China.
 - Success of the **Green Revolution** contributed to the growth of Rabi crops, especially wheat.
- Macro Management Mode of Agriculture, National Food Security Mission and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana are few **government initiatives** to support wheat cultivation.
- The **wheat exports from India witnessed a significant growth of 808%** in the fiscal 2020-21.
 - India exported a substantial quantity of grain to **seven new countries** - Yemen, Indonesia, Bhutan, Philippines, Iran, Cambodia and Myanmar during 2020-21.



Source: PIB

Silambam

Why in News

Recently, **an Indian named Ganesan Sandhirakasan has won the top prize** in a government-initiated competition for migrant workers in Singapore **for his performance of Silambam**.

Key Points

- **About:**

- Silambam is an **ancient weapon-based martial art** that emerged in **Tamilakam, which is now Tamil Nadu region of India. It is one of the oldest martial arts**

in the world.



- The term Silambam contains a meaning which itself reveals about the sport, **silam stands for a 'mountain' and bam stands for bamboo** which is the main weapon used in this form of martial arts.

It is closely linked to the Kerala martial art **kalaripayattu**.

- **Foot movement** are key elements to silambam and kutta varisai (empty hand version). There are **sixteen movements needed to master the movement of the foot** to keep pace with the movement of the stick.
- The main **goal of the training is to defend the user against several armed opposition.**

- **Weapons Used:**

- **Bamboo staff**- It is the main weapon and the length of the bamboo staff depends on the height of the practitioner.
- **Maru**- a thrusting weapon which is made from horns of deer.
- **Aruva** (sickle), **Savuku** (a whip), **Vaal** (curved sword), **Kuttu Katai** (spiked knuckle duster), **Katti** (knife), **Sedikuchi** (cudgel or short stick).

- **Origin:**

- It is believed to have **originated somewhere around 1000 BC** and it was brought by the sage **Agastya Munivar**.
- **Sillappadikkaram** and many other works of **Sangam literature** mentions about the practice and it dates back to **2nd century BC** whereas oral **folk tales traces it back even further around 7000 years.**

But according to recent surveys and archaeological excavations, **it has been confirmed that Silambam was practiced from at least 10,000 BC.**

- **Ban and Evolution:**

- It was employed in warfare by most rulers of south India. The soldiers of the **Tamil ruler Veerapandiya Kattabomman used silambam** to wage war against the British colonists, there was a **ban on it by the end of the 18th century.**
- The **ban, coupled with the introduction of firearms**, did affect the combative nature of silambam greatly and due to which it has transformed into a **performance art.**

Other Martial Arts of India

- **Gatka**- Punjab
- **Paika**- Odisha
- **Thag Ta**- Manipur
- **Kalaripayattu**- Kerala
- **Choliya**- Uttarakhand
- **Pang Lhabso**- Sikkim
- **Musti Yudha**- Uttar Pradesh
- **Mardani Khel**- Maharashtra
- **Pari Khanda**- Bihar

Source: IE

Matsya Setu

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying** has launched the Online Course Mobile App “**Matsya Setu**” for fish farmers.

The app was developed by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA)** and **National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB)**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It **aims to disseminate the latest freshwater aquaculture technologies** to the aqua farmers of the country, thus increasing the productivity and income.
 - Aquaculture is **breeding, raising, and harvesting fish, shellfish, and aquatic plants**.
 - **India is the second major producer of fish** through aquaculture in the world.
 - It has a focus on **grow-out culture of commercially important fishes** like carp, catfish, scampi, murrel, ornamental fish, pearl farming etc.
 - It can be used **to disseminate the latest information on different schemes among the stakeholders**, especially fishers, fish farmers, youth and entrepreneurs across the country, and **facilitate ease of doing business**.

- **Other Related Initiatives:**

- **Shaphari: Certification Scheme for Aquaculture Products**: It is a market-based tool for hatcheries to adopt good aquaculture practices and help produce quality antibiotic-free shrimp products to assure global consumers.
- Establishment of **Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)** during 2018-19.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana**: The programme aims to achieve 22 million tonnes of fish production by 2024-25. Also, it is expected to create employment opportunities for 55 lakh people.
- Focus on **Blue Revolution**: Creating an enabling environment for integrated and holistic management of fisheries for the socio-economic development of the fishers and fish farmers.
- Extension of **Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** facilities to fishers and fish farmers to help them in meeting their working capital needs.

Source: PIB
