



## China's 'Xiaokang' Border Defence Villages along the LAC

**For Prelims:** [Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#), [Xiaokang Border Defence Villages](#), [Tibet Autonomous Region](#), [Line of Control](#), [Vibrant Villages program](#)

**For Mains:** India China Border Dispute, India and its Neighbourhood, Effect of Policies of Countries on India's Interests

**Source:** [IE](#)

### Why in News?

In recent developments along the [Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#) between [India and China](#), Chinese nationals have begun occupying previously vacant "**Xiaokang**" border defence villages.

- These villages, constructed by China in 2019, have raised concerns for the Indian Army, particularly regarding their occupants' nature and strategic implications.

### What are the "Xiaokang" Border Defence Villages?

#### ▪ **Model Villages:**

- The Xiaokang or "well-off villages" border defence villages are a part of China's strategic infrastructure development initiative along its borders, particularly along the LAC with India.
  - Notable areas of occupation include **villages across from Lohit Valley and the [Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh](#)**.
- They are built in regions where territorial claims are contested or where there is a perceived need to reinforce sovereignty.

#### ▪ **Dual-use Infrastructure:**

- These villages are designed to serve multiple purposes, **including civilian settlement and military presence**, hence characterized as "dual-use infrastructure."
- They are built in regions where territorial claims are contested or where there is a perceived need to reinforce sovereignty.

#### ▪ **Associated Concerns for India:**

- **Territorial Claims:** China's construction of **628 such villages along India's borders** with the [Tibet Autonomous Region](#) signifies a concerted effort to assert territorial claims along the LAC. This raises concerns for Indian military strategists, highlighting the need for vigilance along the border.
- **Military Implications:** The villages' potential for dual-use raises concerns about increased militarisation along the already tense LAC.
- **Uncertain Intentions:** The lack of transparency regarding the specific purpose and scale of the civilian population in these villages creates suspicion and **hinders trust-building efforts**.

### What are India's Initiatives along the LAC?

In response to China's infrastructure development, India has intensified efforts to enhance its border infrastructure since 2019.

▪ **Vibrant Villages Program:**

- The **Vibrant Villages program** aims to modernise 663 border villages, with 17 selected for development along the China-India border in regions like Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.

▪ **Border Roads Organization (BRO):**

- The **BRO** has completed **90 infrastructure projects along the India-China border**, worth Rs 2,941 crore.
  - As of September 2023, 36 of these projects are in Arunachal Pradesh, 26 in Ladakh, and 11 in Jammu and Kashmir.
- BRO is involved in major highways, including the **Trans-Arunachal Highway, Frontier Highway, and East-West Industrial Corridor Highway**, which are under construction to improve connectivity, particularly in the eastern part of **Arunachal Pradesh** and the Tawang region.

▪ **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):**

- The **BADP** is a centrally sponsored scheme that aims to meet the special **developmental needs of the people living** in remote and inaccessible areas situated near the international border.
- The funds can be used for projects relating to Infrastructure, Livelihood, Education, Health, Agriculture, Allied sectors.

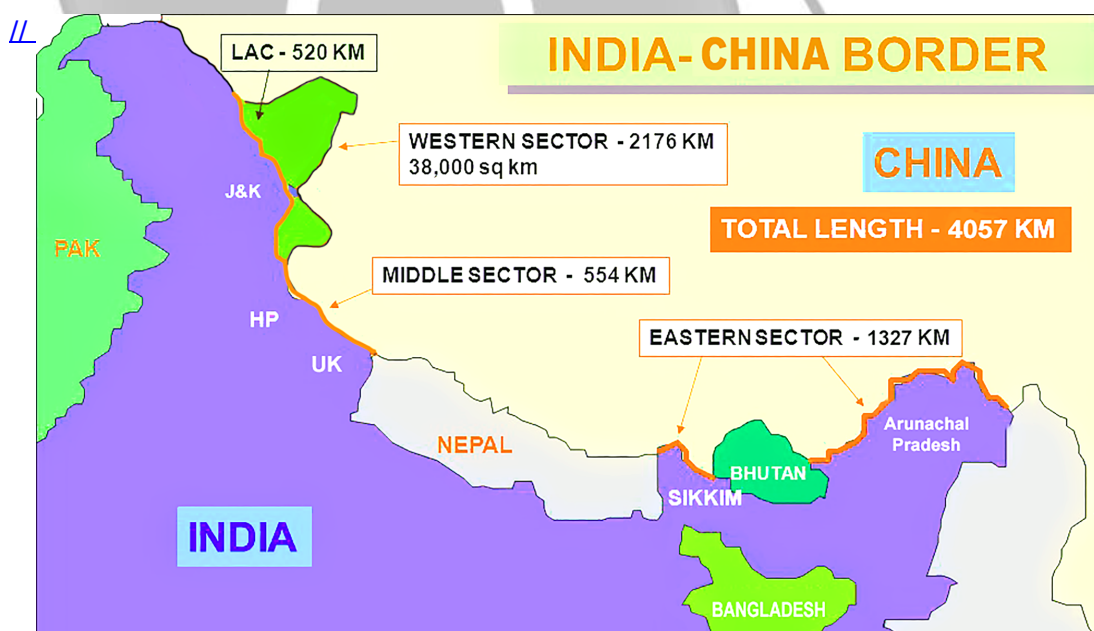
▪ **Railways:**

- Indian Railways is constructing strategic rail lines in the Northeast region to facilitate the swift mobilization of the Indian army.

## What is the Line of Actual Control (LAC)?

▪ **About:**

- The LAC serves as the **boundary separating Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory**.
  - India asserts the length of the LAC to be 3,488 km, whereas China contends it to be approximately 2,000 km.
- This demarcation is categorized into **three sectors**:
  - **Eastern sector** encompassing Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.
  - **Middle sector** spanning Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.
  - **Western sector** located in Ladakh.



#### ▪ **Disagreements Surrounding the LAC:**

- The primary dispute regarding the LAC arises from its alignment in different sectors. The LAC in the eastern sector follows the [1914 McMahon Line](#) with minor disputes about ground positions.
- Major disagreements exist in the Western sector, originating from letters written by Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai to PM Jawaharlal Nehru in 1959.
  - The LAC was described only in general terms on maps not to scale by the Chinese.
  - The Chinese claimed to have **withdrawn to 20 km behind the LAC in November 1959 after the 1962 War.**
  - During the Doklam crisis in 2017, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson urged India to abide by the "1959 LAC".
- Despite subsequent clarifications, ambiguity persisted, leading to contrasting interpretations by both nations.

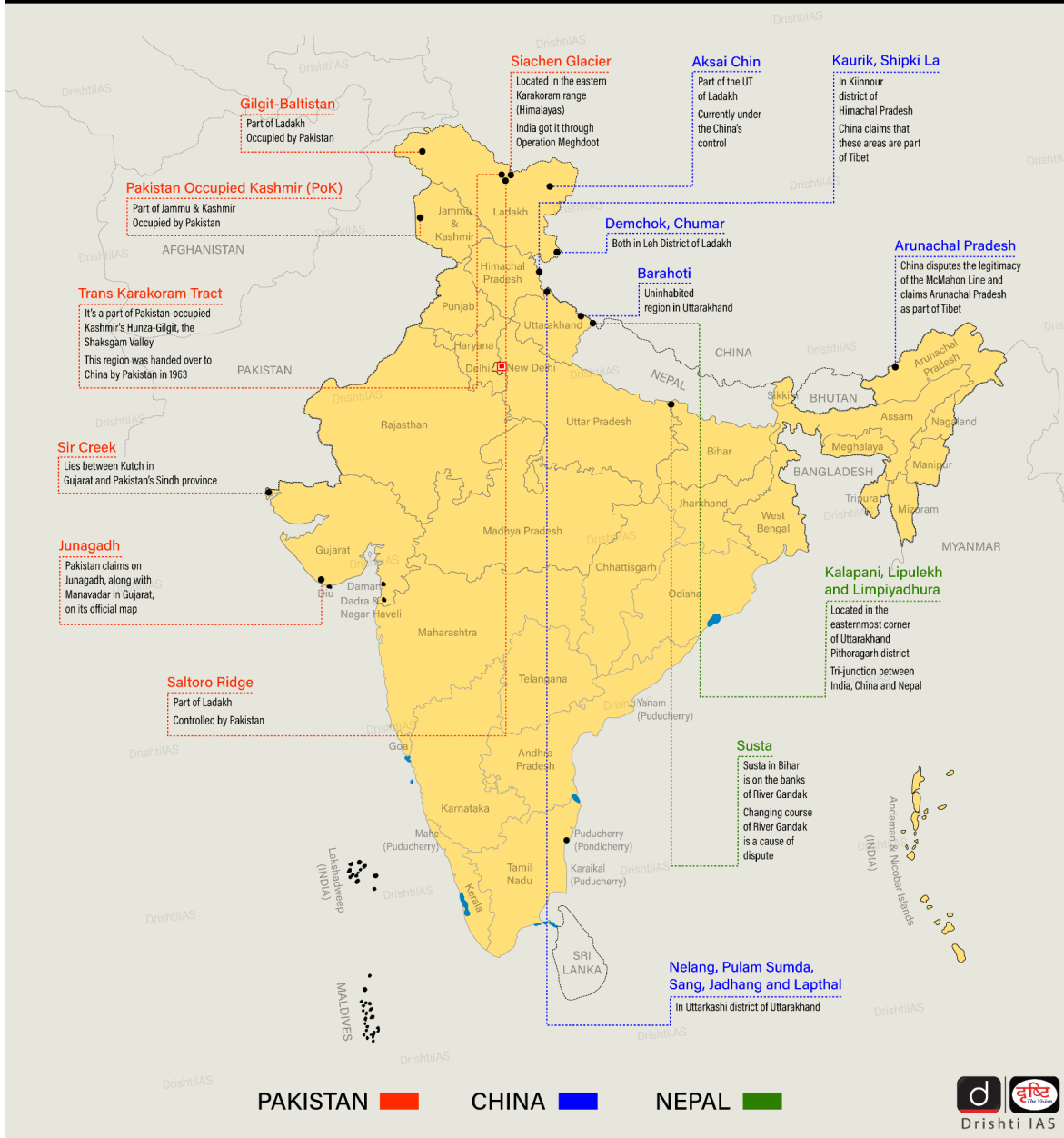
#### ▪ **India's Response to China's LAC Designation:**

- India initially rejected the concept of the LAC in 1959 and 1962, citing **concerns over its vague definition and potential exploitation by China** to alter ground realities through military force.
  - India's shift in the LAC approach started in the mid-1980s due to increased border encounters, prompting a review of patrolling boundaries.
- **India formally accepted the concept of the LAC in 1993** and the two sides signed the **Agreement to Maintain Peace and Tranquility at the LAC.**
  - India and China have only exchanged maps for the middle sector of the LAC. Maps were "shared" for the Western sector but never formally exchanged, and the process of clarifying the LAC has effectively stalled since 2002.
- The most serious recent episodes of conflict were in [Galwan Valley in Ladakh in 2020](#) and in [Tawang](#) in Arunachal Pradesh in 2022.
  - Observers on both sides of the LAC agree that the number of serious military **confrontations has increased since 2013.**

#### ▪ **LAC vs Line of Control with Pakistan:**

- The [Line of Control \(LoC\)](#) was established in **1972 after the Kashmir War**, based on the ceasefire line negotiated by the [UN](#) in 1948. It has **international legal validity** and is delineated on a map signed by both countries.
  - On the other hand, the **LAC is not agreed upon by both countries and is not delineated on a map** or demarcated on the ground.

# India's Border Dispute With Neighbors



## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims:

**Q. Siachen Glacier is situated to the (2020)**

- (a) East of Aksai Chin
- (b) East of Leh
- (c) North of Gilgit
- (d) North of Nubra Valley

### Mains:

**Q. Border management is a complex task due to difficult terrain and hostile relations with some countries. Elucidate the challenges and strategies for effective border management. (2016).**

## Digital Public Infrastructure

**For Prelims:** [Digital Public Infrastructures \(DPIs\)](#), Digital Public Infrastructure of India - Accelerating India's Digital Inclusion, [Aadhaar](#), [UPI \(Unified Payment Interface\)](#), and [FASTag](#).

**For Mains:** Digital Public Infrastructures (DPIs), Challenges and Benefits of Digital Public Infrastructure.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

Recently, Nasscom and Arthur D. Little have jointly released a report titled **Digital Public Infrastructure of India - Accelerating India's Digital Inclusion**, which stated that India's [Digital Public Infrastructures \(DPIs\)](#) are likely to propel India towards a USD 1 trillion digital economy by 2030.

### What is a DPI?

- **About:** DPI refers to blocks or platforms such as **digital identification, payment infrastructure and data exchange solutions** that help countries deliver essential services to their people, empowering citizens and improving lives by enabling digital inclusion.
- **DPI Ecosystem:** DPIs mediate the flow of people, money and information. These three sets become the foundation for developing an effective DPI ecosystem:
  - First, the flow of people through a digital ID System.
  - Second, the flow of money through a real-time fast payment system.
  - And third, the flow of personal information through a consent-based data sharing system to actualise the benefits of DPIs and to empower the citizen with a real ability to control data.
- **IndiaStack: It is a set of APIs** (Application programming interface) that allows governments, businesses, startups and developers to utilise an unique digital Infrastructure to solve India's hard problems towards presence-less, paperless, and cashless service delivery.
  - India, through India Stack, became the **first country to develop all three foundational DPIs, [Digital identity \(Aadhaar\)](#), [Real-time fast payment \(UPI\)](#) and [Account Aggregator built on the \[Data Empowerment Protection Architecture \\(DEPA\\)\]\(#\)](#).**
  - DEPA creates a digital framework that allows users to share their data on their own terms through a third-party entity, who are known as Consent Managers.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Economic Impact:**
  - DPIs are projected to play a significant role in propelling India towards a USD 1 trillion digital economy by 2030, helping the country to become a **USD 8 trillion economy**.
  - DPIs are expected to enhance citizens' efficiency and promote social as well as **financial inclusion**.
- **Scalability and Reach:**
  - Mature DPIs like [Aadhaar](#), [UPI](#), and [FASTag](#) have already witnessed exponential adoption by 2022, and they are anticipated to further scale up over the next 7-8 years, reaching even the remotest segments of the population.



- Mature DPIs have already generated a significant economic value equivalent to 0.9% of India's **GDP (Gross Domestic Product)**. By 2030, this value is projected to increase to ~2.9%-4.2% of GDP, considering both direct and indirect impacts.
  - The **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**, which aims to support India's digital health infrastructure, will drive much of the increase in value.
- **Global Leadership:**
  - **India is currently a global leader in developing DPIs**, utilising them to implement widespread adoption of digital payments, data-sharing infrastructures, and bolstering domestic businesses, spurred entrepreneurship in the country.
- **Government Support and IT Ecosystem:**
  - The success of DPIs is attributed to the relentless support by the government and enabled by the IT intellectual capital and startup ecosystem, creating a favourable environment for innovation and growth.
- **Evolution and Superior User Experience:**
  - Existing digital entities are expected to evolve to deliver superior user experiences, leveraging new age technologies such as AI, **Web 3**, and others.
  - **Aadhaar is expected to continue to be a major contributor** as its use cases expand to a broader range of services, further solidifying its role within India's digital infrastructure.
- **Foundation for Digital Revolution:**
  - The foundation of India's digital revolution has been strengthened by DPIs or India Stack, enhancing the country's ability to utilise digital technologies at a population scale to drive societal changes and economic growth.
  - DPIs form the cornerstone to shape the "**tech-ade**" and ultimately drive India's growth path, aiming for the "**India@47**" milestone.
- **Challenges and Suggestions:**
  - While DPI provides opportunities, challenges remain. These include the **lack of connections** between stakeholders, **no real-time data, limited language options, and little reach** beyond government services.
  - The governments must provide policy support and regulatory clarity, and set up **task forces to drive adoption of DPI**. They must also look to **partner with startups and enterprises**.

## What are the Pillars of India's DPI Ecosystem?

- **Aadhaar:**
  - Aadhaar is a strategic policy tool for social and financial inclusion, public sector delivery reforms, managing fiscal budgets, increasing convenience and promoting hassle-free people-centric governance.
  - Aadhaar holders can voluntarily use their Aadhaar for private sector purposes, and private sector entities need not seek special permission for such usage.
- **DigiYatra:**
  - **DigiYatra** is a Biometric Enabled Seamless Travel (BEST) experience based on a **Facial Recognition System (FRS)**.
  - It envisages that **travellers pass through various checkpoints at the airport through paperless and contactless processing**, using facial features to establish their identity, that is linked to the boarding pass.
- **DigiLocker:**
  - **DigiLocker** has 150 million users, six billion stored documents, and done with a tiny budget of RS 50 crore over seven years.
  - The users can store their documents such as insurance, medical reports, PAN card, passport, marriage certificate, school certificate and other documents in the digital format.
- **UPI:**
  - Unified Payment Interface (UPI) has crossed 8 bn transactions per month and transacts a value of USD 180 billion a month.
  - UPI is currently the biggest among the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** operated systems including National Automated Clearing House (NACH), IMPS, **AePS**, Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), RuPay etc.

## Note

- DPs align with core **UN Sustainable Development Goals** by providing citizen-centric solutions.
- India's interoperable and open-source DPs are now being **adopted or considered by over 30 countries** to enhance social and financial inclusion.

## What are the Challenges of DPs in India?

- **Lack of Access to Infrastructure:**
  - In many regions, especially rural and remote areas, there is **inadequate or no access to reliable internet connectivity** and digital infrastructure. **Limited access to electricity** and the absence of necessary digital hardware like computers and smartphones further exacerbate the problem.
- **Digital Divide:**
  - India faces a significant digital divide between urban and rural areas. While **urban centres generally have better access** to digital infrastructure and services, rural regions often lack reliable internet connectivity and **face technological disparities**.
- **Affordability:**
  - Even if digital infrastructure is available, the **cost of internet access and digital devices can be prohibitive** for many individuals and families, particularly in low-income communities.
- **Language and Content Barriers:**
  - The **dominance of content in a few major languages** can exclude non-English speakers or those who are not proficient in the predominant language. The lack of localised and relevant content can hinder access to vital information and services.
- **Physical and Cognitive Disabilities:**
  - **Persons with disabilities often face challenges** in accessing and using digital technologies due to limited accessibility features and design considerations in digital platforms.
- **Privacy and Security Concerns:**
  - Fear of **privacy breaches and data security issues** can deter individuals from embracing digital technologies, especially when it comes to sensitive personal information.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.
2. Once issued, Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.

### Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

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## Horticulture Sector in India

**For Prelims:** [Horticulture farming](#), Pomology, Olericulture, Arboriculture, Ornamental, Floriculture, Landscape, Horticulture, [Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture](#), [Green Revolution - Krishonnati Yojana](#), National Horticulture Mission, Horticulture Mission for North East & Himalayan States, National Horticulture Board, Central Institute for Horticulture, [India Digital Ecosystem of Agriculture \(IDEA\)](#), [Horticulture Cluster Development Programme](#), [National Horticulture Board \(NHB\)](#), [Agriculture Infrastructure Fund](#), [Seed Technology](#)

**For Mains:** Horticulture and its contribution in the economy.

[Source: IE](#)

## Why in News?

In recent years, India has witnessed a significant shift in dietary preferences, with a growing emphasis on **nutrition security** rather than mere **calorie intake**.

- To meet the evolving dietary needs of a burgeoning population, [horticulture farming](#) is experiencing a notable upsurge across the nation.

## What is Horticulture Farming?

- **Horticulture** is the branch of agriculture concerned with intensively cultured plants directly used by humans for **food, medicinal purposes** and **aesthetic gratification**.
- It is the cultivation, production and sale of **vegetables, fruits, flowers, herbs, ornamental or exotic plants**.
- The term Horticulture is derived from the Latin words **hortus (garden)** and **cultūra (cultivation)**.
- **L.H. Bailey** is considered the **Father of American Horticulture** and **M.H. Marigowda** is considered the **Father of Indian Horticulture**.
- **Classification:**
  - **Pomology:** Planting, harvesting, storing, processing, and marketing of **fruit and nut crops**.
  - **Olericulture:** Producing and marketing **vegetables**.
  - **Arboriculture:** Study, selection and care of individual trees, shrubs or other perennial woody plants.
  - **Ornamental Horticulture:** It has two subparts:
    - **Floriculture:** Production, use and marketing of **floral crops**.
    - **Landscape Horticulture:** Production and marketing of plants used to beautify the outdoor environment.

## What is the State of Horticulture Sector in India?

- India is the **2nd largest producer** of **fruits** and **vegetables**.
- The Indian horticulture sector contributes about **33%** to the agriculture [Gross Value Added \(GVA\)](#) making a very significant contribution to the Indian economy.
- India is currently producing about **320.48 million tons** of **horticulture** produce which has surpassed the **food grain production**, that too from much less area (25.66 million Ha. for horticulture against 127.6 M. ha. for food grains).
- Productivity of horticulture crops is much higher compared to productivity of food grains (12.49 tones/ha against 2.23 tones/ha.).
- Productivity of horticulture crops has increased by about **38.5%** between **2004-05** and **2021-22**.
- According to the [Food and Agricultural Organisation \(FAO\)](#), India leads in the production of certain vegetables (ginger and okra) and fruits (banana, mangoes and papaya).
- In terms of export, **India is ranked 14th** in **vegetables** and **23rd** in **fruits**, and its share in the **global horticultural market is a mere 1%**.



- Around **15-20% of the fruits and vegetables in India are wasted** along the supply chain or at consumer level, contributing to [greenhouse gas emissions \(GHGs\)](#).

## What are the Challenges Faced by the Horticulture Sector in India?

- **Climate Change Vulnerability:**
  - **Erratic Weather Patterns:** Shifts in temperature, rainfall, and unpredictable weather events pose a significant challenge to horticultural crops, leading to **reduced yields and crop losses**.
  - **Extreme Events:** Increasing frequency and intensity of droughts, floods, and cyclones **disrupt horticultural production** and affect **crop quality**.
- **Water Management Issues:**
  - **Water Scarcity:** Limited access to irrigation water, coupled with **inefficient water management practices**, hampers the growth of horticultural crops, especially in water-stressed regions.
  - **Overexploitation of Water Resources:** Unsustainable groundwater extraction and inefficient irrigation techniques lead to depletion of water resources, exacerbating water scarcity issues.
- **Pests and Diseases:**
  - **Pesticide Resistance:** Increasing resistance of pests and diseases to conventional pesticides necessitates the development and **adoption of integrated pest management (IPM) practices**.
  - **Invasive Species:** Introduction and spread of **invasive pests (e.g. [Desert locusts](#))** and diseases pose a threat to horticultural crops, requiring vigilant monitoring and management strategies.
- **Post-Harvest Losses and Infrastructure Constraints:**
  - **Inadequate Storage Facilities:** Lack of proper storage infrastructure results in post-harvest losses, reducing the shelf life and market value of horticultural produce.
  - **Cold Chain and Transportation Challenges:** Insufficient cold chain facilities and inadequate transportation networks lead to spoilage and wastage of perishable horticultural commodities.

## How can the Horticulture Sector be Improved?

- **Adoption of Climate-Smart Practices:**
  - Promote the **adoption of climate-resilient crop varieties** and sustainable farming practices to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change on horticulture.
  - Invest in research and development of **drought-tolerant and heat-resistant crop** varieties suitable for changing climatic conditions.
- **Efficient Water Management:**
  - Encourage the use of [drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting](#), and efficient water-saving technologies to optimise water use efficiency in horticulture.
  - Implement water management strategies such as **water pricing mechanisms** and watershed management initiatives to address water scarcity issues.
- **Integrated Pest and Disease Management:**
  - Promote the adoption of [Integrated Pest and Disease Management \(IPM\)](#) practices, emphasising biological control, cultural practices, and judicious use of pesticides.
  - **Strengthen surveillance** and early detection systems to monitor and manage pest and disease outbreaks effectively.
- **Investment in Infrastructure and Value Chain Development:**
  - Upgrade and expand **cold storage facilities**, packhouses, and transportation networks to **reduce post-harvest losses** and improve market access for horticultural farmers.
  - Facilitate [public-private partnerships](#) and investment in infrastructure development to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of the horticultural value chain.
- **Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer:**
  - Provide training and extension services to horticultural farmers on modern farming techniques, good agricultural practices, and market-oriented production.

- **Foster collaboration between research institutions**, universities, and agricultural extension agencies to disseminate best practices and technological innovations in horticulture.

## What are the Government Initiatives to Improve Horticulture?

### ▪ **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH):**

#### ◦ **About:**

- [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.
- **Nodal Ministry:** The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is implementing MIDH (since **2014-15**) under [Green Revolution - Krishonnati Yojana](#).
- **Funding Pattern: 60%/40%** contribution of Union and states (except states in **North East and Himalayas**)
  - For **North Eastern States and Himalayan States**, the Union government contributes **90%**.

#### ◦ **MIDH Sub-Schemes:**

- **National Horticulture Mission (NHM):** It is being implemented by **State Horticulture Missions (SHM)** in selected districts of **18 States and 6 Union Territories**.
- **Horticulture Mission for North East & Himalayan States (HMNEH):** HMNEH is being implemented for the overall development of Horticulture in North East and Himalayan states.
- **Central Institute for Horticulture (CIH):** CIH was established at Medi Zip Hima, Nagaland in 2006-07 for providing technical backstopping through capacity building and training of farmers and Field functionaries in the North Eastern Region.

### ▪ [Horticulture Cluster Development Programme:](#)

#### ◦ **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: By the [National Horticulture Board \(NHB\)](#) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. The ministry has identified 55 horticulture clusters.**

#### ◦ **Objectives:**

- The CDP aims to improve exports of targeted crops by about 20% and create cluster-specific brands to enhance the competitiveness of cluster crops.
- 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](#).

## Conclusion

- To attain demand-driven production, increased productivity, effective credit and risk management, and improved market connections, there is a necessity to reinforce multi-stakeholder partnerships involving farmers, government, consumers, industry, and academia/research.
- As India strives to emerge as a leading global hub for fruits and vegetables (F&V), the path forward will be characterised by collaborative endeavours and a collective dedication to fostering tangible income and livelihood advancements for the nation's small-scale farmers.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### **Mains:**

**Q.1** Assess the role of National Horticulture Mission (NHM) in boosting the production, productivity and income of horticulture farms. How far has it succeeded in increasing the income of farmers? **(2018)**

**Q.2** What are the present challenges before crop diversification? How do emerging technologies provide an opportunity for crop diversification? **(2021)**

**Q.3** Explain various types of revolutions, took place in Agriculture after Independence in India. How have these revolutions helped in poverty alleviation and food security in India? **(2017)**

## High-Risk Pregnancies in India

**Source:TH**

### Why in News?

A recent study published in Journal of Global Health by researchers from the [ICMR's National Institute for Research in Reproductive and Child Health \(NIRRH\)](#) in Mumbai, sheds light on the prevalence of **high-risk pregnancies** across India.

- A high-risk pregnancy indicates that a woman possesses one or more factors that elevate the **likelihood of health complications for either herself or the baby**, as well as an increased risk of preterm delivery.

### What are the Key Findings of the Study?

- **High Prevalence:** The study found that **49.4% of pregnant women in India** had high-risk pregnancies.
  - Approximately **33%** of pregnant women had a single high-risk factor, while 16% had multiple high-risk factors.
- **Regional Disparities:** States like **Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram**, along with **Telangana**, exhibited the highest prevalence of high-risk factors.
  - Conversely, **Sikkim, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh** had the lowest prevalence of high-risk pregnancies.
- **Factors Contributing to High-Risk Pregnancies:**
  - **Birth Spacing:** Short birth spacing, defined as **less than 18 months between previous birth and current conception**, was identified as a primary factor contributing to high-risk pregnancies.
  - **Maternal Risk Factors:** These included factors such as maternal age (adolescent or older than 35 years), short stature, and higher body mass index (BMI).
  - **Lifestyle and Previous Birth Outcome Risks:** Lifestyle risk factors like **tobacco and alcohol use**, as well as previous adverse birth outcomes such as miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth, were significant contributors to high-risk pregnancies.

### What are the Indian Government Initiatives Related to Pregnant Women?

- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:** It is being implemented as per provisions under **Section 4 of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** which provides for financial support for

pregnant and lactating mothers is to improve the health and nutrition for mother and child as well as compensation for wage loss.

- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY):** Provides cash assistance to pregnant women, especially from vulnerable sections, to encourage institutional delivery.
- **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK):** Entitles all pregnant women to free delivery, including **C-sections (Caesarean section)**, in public health institutions along with free transport, diagnostics, medicines, and diet.
- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):** Provides pregnant women a fixed day, free of cost assured and quality antenatal check up by a **Specialist/Medical Officer** on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of every month.
- **Surakshit Matratva Ashwasan (SUMAN):** Aims to ensure dignified, respectful, and quality healthcare at no cost for every pregnant woman and newborn in public facilities.
- **LaQshya:** Aims to improve the quality of care in **labour rooms**, potentially reducing complications and improving maternal and newborn outcomes.

**Read More:** [Stem Cells in Menstrual Blood](#)

**Legal Insight:** [Supreme Court Rejects Plea to Abort 26-Week Pregnancy](#)

<https://www.drishtijudiciary.com/en>

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### ***Prelims:***

**Q. The endeavour of Janani Suraksha Yojana Programme is (2012)**

1. to promote institutional deliveries
2. to provide monetary assistance to the mother to meet the cost of delivery
3. to provide for wage loss due to pregnancy and confinement

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (a)**

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## Tirupati Recognized for Waste Management Leadership

**Source:** [PIB](#)

### **Why in News?**

Recently, the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs highlighted **Tirupati Municipal Corporation (MC)**, **Andhra Pradesh** for its outstanding achievements in waste management and sanitation.



## What are the Achievements of Tirupati in Waste Management and Sanitation?

- [Swachh Survekshan 2023 Ranking:](#)
  - Tirupati Municipal Corporation secured the 8th spot among cleanest cities with a population of over 1 lakh, demonstrating its commitment to cleanliness.
- **Garbage Free City (GFC) and Water Plus Rating:**
  - Achieved a [5-star Garbage Free City \(GFC\)](#) and Water Plus(+) rating.

### Note:

- [Swachh Bharat Mission \(Urban\)](#) tests cities on cleanliness parameters using categories [Open Defecation Free \(ODF\)+](#), [ODF++](#), and [Water+](#).
  - **ODF+:**
    - Focuses on toilets with water, hygiene, and maintenance. ODF+ cities ensure the **sustainability of the ODF status to maintain proper toilet facilities.**
  - **ODF++:**
    - Focuses on **toilets with sludge and septage management.** ODF++ cities ensure the safe collection, conveyance, treatment, and disposal of all faecal sludge and sewage.
  - **Water+:**
    - Water+ certification protocol evaluates, inter-alia, that **no untreated used water or faecal sludge** is discharged into the **environment/water bodies** and all used water (sewage & faecal sludge) is safely contained, transported, and treated, along with maximum reuse of treated used water.

## How Does Tirupati Handle Waste Management and Sanitation?

- **Waste Generation Statistics:**
  - Tirupati (largest [Urban Local Body \(ULB\)](#) in Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district) a city generating approximately 115 tonnes per day (TPD) of Wet Waste, 15 TPD of Food Waste, 61 TPD of Dry Waste & Recyclables, 1 TPD of Domestic Hazardous Waste, and 2 TPD of Plastic Waste, along with an additional 25 Tons per day of Construction and Demolition waste, has prioritised robust waste management.
  - All waste collected gets scientifically processed at the respective waste processing and management facilities.
- **Robust Waste Collection Infrastructure:**
  - Tirupati achieves **100% door-to-door waste collection**, covering every gate in the city.
    - Tirupati MC provides essential infrastructure such as Ghanta Gaddis and auto tippers, equipped with compartments for segregating different types of waste.
- **Technology Integration for Efficiency:**
  - Tirupati utilizes an **Online Waste Management System (OWMS) with [Radio Frequency Identification \(RFID\) technology](#)** for real-time tracking of door-to-door waste collection, ensuring accountability and efficiency.
- **Waste Processing and Management Facilities:**
  - Tirupati focuses on **decentralized waste processing**, easing the burden on centralized plants and reducing transportation costs.
  - The city identifies and classifies bulk waste generators, streamlining waste management efforts.
- **Plastic Waste Management Initiatives:**
  - Tirupati manages its plastic waste at a dedicated Plastic Waste Management Facility, equipped to **handle low-grade [plastic](#) efficiently.**
    - The introduction of a Washing Plant and Agglomerator Machine enables Tirupati to **recycle plastic waste effectively, contributing to sustainable waste management practices.**
- **Organic Waste Management:**
  - Tirupati operates a **Bio-methanation Plant** that converts **organic waste into bio-**

**methane gas and quality compost**, promoting sustainable agricultural practices and energy production.

- The generated bio-gas is utilised for various applications such as cooking, energy, and vehicle fuel, contributing to the city's energy sustainability goals.

▪ **Construction and Demolition(C&D) Waste Management:**

- Partnering with Pro Enviro Solutions, Tirupati establishes a facility to manage 20-25 TPD of C&D waste, **promoting circular economy principles**.
- Processed materials from C&D waste are utilised for manufacturing and developmental works, fostering sustainability.

Read more: [Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023](#)

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims:

**Q 1.** As per the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 in India, which one of the following statements is correct? **(2019)**

- (a)** Waste generator has to segregate waste into five categories.
- (b)** The Rules are applicable to notified urban local bodies, notified towns and all industrial townships only.
- (c)** The Rules provide for exact and elaborate criteria for the identification of sites for landfills and waste processing facilities.
- (d)** It is mandatory on the part of the waste generator that the waste generated in one district cannot be moved to another district.

**Ans: (c)**

### Mains:

**Q.1** What are the impediments in disposing of the huge quantities of discarded solid waste which are continuously being generated? How do we safely remove the toxic wastes that have been accumulating in our habitable environment? **(2018)**

**Q.2** "To ensure effective implementation of policies addressing the water, sanitation and hygiene needs the identification of the beneficiary segments is to be synchronized with anticipated outcomes." Examine the statement in the context of the WASH scheme. **(2017)**

## Notices of Interpol

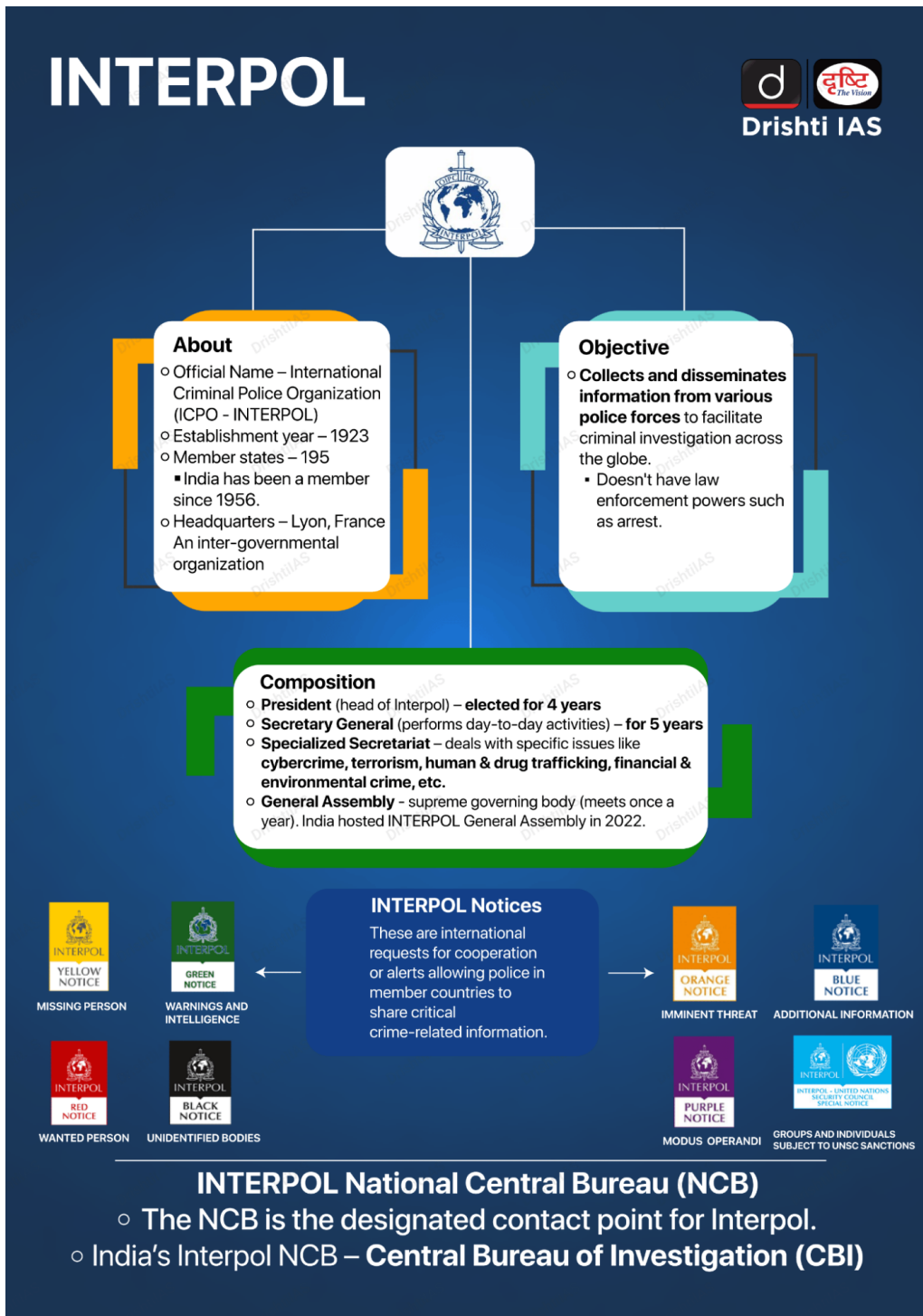
[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

Recently concerns have been raised about the misuse of [Interpol's notice system](#), especially the issuance of **blue corner notices**, which are **less scrutinised** than their red corner notices.

- The number of blue notices has **approximately doubled in the last ten years**.

- Critics have argued that **countries often exploit** existing protocols to target political refugees and dissidents.



## What is the Interpol Notice System?

- **About:**
  - **Interpol** serves as a vital information-sharing network for **national police forces** to combat transnational crimes.
  - **Interpol (General Secretariat)** issues notices to member states for missing or wanted persons, which, while **not mandatory** for states to follow, are often treated as warrants for **arrest and extradition**.
- **Requesting Authority: Notices are issued at the request of:**
  - A member country's **Interpol National Central Bureau**
  - At the request of **International Criminal Tribunals** and the **International Criminal**

**Court** to seek persons wanted for committing crimes within their jurisdiction, notably **genocide, war crimes, and crimes** against humanity.

- At the request of the **United Nations** concerning the implementation of sanctions imposed by the **Security Council**.

▪ **Types of Notices:**



**What are the Concerns Regarding the Misuse of Interpol Notice?**

▪ **Blue Notice Vs Red Notice:**

- **Blue Notice:** Referred to as an "enquiry notice," enables police forces in member states to exchange crucial crime-related information, including verifying a person's criminal record and location, among other details.
  - Blue Corner notices are issued **before** the filing of **criminal charges**.
- **Red Notice:** Issued by a member state to apprehend a wanted criminal through extradition or other lawful means, targeting individuals sought by national jurisdictions for prosecution or to serve a sentence following an arrest warrant or court ruling.
  - Interpol can act on a **request from any country**, regardless of whether it is the fugitive's home country, as long as the alleged crime occurred there.
  - The individual in question may be **detained and apprehended** while moving through a member state, with additional adverse outcomes including the freezing of bank accounts.
  - Interpol **lacks** the authority to **mandate law enforcement** agencies in any nation to apprehend the individual targeted by a red corner notice, as the decision to do so is entirely at their discretion.

▪ **Controversy Surrounding Red Notice: Although Interpol's Constitution explicitly forbids any activities of a political character, activists have accused it of failing to enforce this rule. For example:**

- **Russia** frequently issues notices and diffusions for the arrest of Kremlin opponents, contributing to 38% of all public red notices according to the US rights organisation **Freedom House**.
- International human rights groups have also accused **China, Iran, Turkey, and Tunisia**,



among others, of abusing the agency's notice system for **authoritarian ends**.

- Interpol declined India's second request to issue a red corner notice against Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, designated as a "terrorist" by the Ministry of Home Affairs under the [UAPA](#) citing inadequate information and highlighting that his actions have a "**clear political dimension**", which is beyond the scope of a red corner notice under Interpol's Constitution.
  - **Interpol's Stand: Interpol has strengthened the supervision of its red notice system in light of increasing criticism, but concerns persist over the issuance of blue notices.**
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## Decline of Tropical Glaciers in East Africa

[Source: DTE](#)

Recent analysis of high-resolution satellite images for the years 2021-2022 has revealed a concerning trend of **disappearing ice in Africa**, particularly in the **tropical glaciers of East Africa**.

- Tropical glaciers in East Africa, including those in the **Rwenzori Mountains (Uganda / Democratic Republic of Congo), Mount Kenya (Kenya), and Kilimanjaro** (Tanzania), all within 3° latitude of the equator have significantly reduced in size.
- Kilimanjaro has retained only 8.6% of its glacier area since 1900, Mount Kenya 4.2%, and the Rwenzori Range 5.8%.
  - Studies indicate that more than 90% of the modern glacier extent in East Africa has disappeared by the early 2020s.
  - **Mount Kilimanjaro** is the tallest mountain on the African continent and the **highest free-standing mountain in the world** (5,895 meters above sea level).
- The study underscores the critical importance of **tropical glaciers as indicators of climate variability and climate change**, emphasizing the urgent need for further research and conservation efforts in the face of this environmental challenge.
- Tropical glaciers are typically located near the **Equator and within the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), making them sensitive to climate variations**.
  - The ITCZ is where the trade winds of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres converge near the equator.

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## Ayush Holistic Wellness Centre

[Source: PIB](#)

The [Chief Justice of India](#), inaugurated the '[Ayush Holistic Wellness Centre \(AYUSH HWC\)](#)' at the [Supreme Court \(SC\) of India](#), marking a significant milestone in promoting holistic health within the judiciary.

- The AYUSH HWC is a collaborative effort between the SC and the **All-India Institute of Ayurveda** under the **Ministry of Ayush**.
- The centre is furnished to deliver cutting-edge holistic care, in harmony with [Ayurvedic principles](#) and methodologies, targeting enhancing physical, mental, and emotional wellness for **comprehensive health promotion**.

- AYUSH HWC is a component of [Ayushman Bharat](#) in the [National AYUSH Mission \(NAM\)](#).

[Read more...](#)

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## iMPEL-AI Program to Empower India's AI Innovators

[Source: PIB](#)

Recently, [Microsoft](#) and [iCreate](#) have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** facilitated by the Ministry of Electronics & IT to advance [AI startups](#) in India.

- As a part of it, the **iMPEL-AI (iCreate-Microsoft programme for Emerging Leaders in Artificial Intelligence)** programme was launched.
  - The program will screen 1100 AI innovators across India to become **AI Most Valuable Players (MVPs)** and focus on priority themes of Healthcare, Financial Inclusion, Sustainability, Education, Agriculture, and Smart Cities.
- Microsoft and iCreate will also provide **AI skilling opportunities to 11,000 innovators, startups**, and young Indians from across the country through Microsoft's Learning Management System.
  - On completion, participants will receive **globally recognized certifications from Microsoft**, providing a significant boost to their employability and career progression.
  - Additionally, the program will select and scale 100 startups to build with Azure OpenAI, with the top 25 receiving go-to-market support from **Microsoft's Global Network**.

[Read more...](#)

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## Inclusion of Additional Activities in National Livestock Mission

[Source: PIB](#)

Recently, the **Union Cabinet** has approved additional activities for the [National Livestock Mission](#) (commenced in 2014-15). It includes-

- Entrepreneurship establishment for **horses, donkeys, mules, and camels** with 50% capital subsidy up to 50 lakhs for Individuals, [Farmer Producer Organizations](#), [Self-Help Groups](#), Joint Liability Groups, Farmer Cooperative Organizations, and Section 8 companies of [Companies Act 2013](#).
- Entrepreneurs will receive **50% capital subsidy up to Rs. 50 lakhs for fodder seed processing infrastructure**, including construction, machinery, and seed storage godown.
- State government assistance will be provided for **fodder cultivation in non-forest land**, wasteland, range land, and degraded forest land to increase fodder availability.
- Simplification of the **Livestock Insurance program**, reducing farmer's premium share to 15%, with the remaining premium shared by Centre and State.
  - The number of animals to be insured has also been increased to **10 cattle units** instead of 5 cattle units for **cattle, sheep and goats**.

**Read more:** [India's Livestock Sector](#)

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