

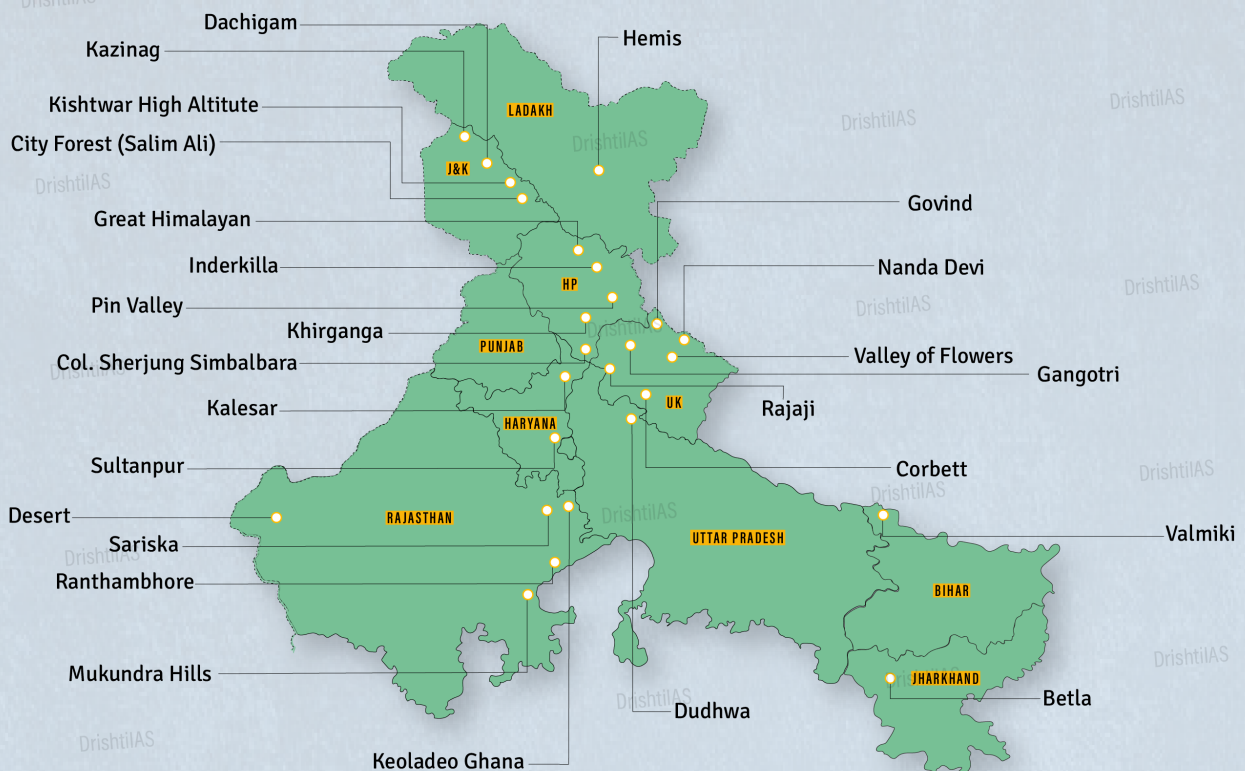


National Parks - I

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National Parks-I

106 National Parks (2022)



ABOUT

- A national park can be notified by the state government for the preservation of its ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, or zoological importance.
- The areas are secured under the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972.
- No human activity is permitted inside the national park except for the ones permitted by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state under the conditions given in the WPA.

FACTS

- Hemis National Park (Ladakh): Largest in South Asia. Also known as Snow Leopard Capital.
- Jim Corbett National Park (Uttarakhand): India's first national park. Project Tiger (1973) was started here.
- Desert National Park (Rajasthan): Second-largest national park in India.



National Parks - II

Joshimath Land Subsidence

Prelims: Natural Disaster, Floods, Draughts, Landslide, Joshimath.

Mains: Reason for Joshimath Land Subsidence and Related Concerns.

Why in News?

Due to land subsidence, Joshimath - a key transit point for tourists travelling to Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib - developed cracks, **causing panic and protests among the local population.**

- Joshimath has been declared a [landslide-subsidence zone](#) and over 60 families living in uninhabitable houses in the sinking town have been evacuated to temporary relief centres.

Where is Joshimath Located?

- Joshimath is a hilly town located on the **Rishikesh-Badrinath National Highway (NH-7) in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.**
- The city serves as a **tourist town as it acts as an overnight rest stop for people visiting Badrinath, Auli, Valley of Flowers, and Hemkund Sahib, among other important religious and tourist locations** in the state.
- Joshimath is also of great strategic importance to **the Indian armed forces and is home to one of the Army's** most important cantonments.
- The town (fall in [high-risk seismic Zone-V](#)) is traversed by running streams with a high **gradient from Vishnuprayag, a confluence of the Dhauliganga and the Alaknanda rivers.**
- It is home to one of the **four cardinal maths or monasteries established by Adi Shankara - Sringeri in Karnataka, Dwarka in Gujarat, Puri in Odisha and Joshimath near Badrinath in Uttarakhand.**



Why is Joshimath Sinking?

▪ Background:

- Cracks on walls and buildings were **first reported in 2021**, as Chamoli district of Uttarakhand experienced frequent landslides and flooding.
- As per reports, the Uttarakhand government's expert panel in 2022 found that several pockets of **Joshimath are "sinking" owing to man-made and natural factors.**
- It was found that a gradual settling or sudden sinking of the earth's surface due **to the removal or displacement of subsurface materials** — has induced structural defects and damage in almost all wards of the city.

▪ Reasons:

- **Site of an Ancient landslide:** According to the **1976 Mishra Committee report**, **Joshimath lies on a deposit of sand and stone**, it's not on the main rock. It lies on an ancient landslide. The report added that undercutting by river currents of Alaknanda and Dhauliganga are also playing their part in bringing landslides.
 - The committee had recommended that **restrictions be placed on heavy construction work, blasting or digging to remove boulders** for road repairs and other construction, felling of trees.
- **Geography:** Scattered rocks in the area are **covered with old landslide debris comprising boulders**, gneissic rocks, and loose soil, with a low bearing capacity.
 - These gneissic rocks are highly weathered and have a low cohesive value with a tendency of high pore pressure when saturated with water, especially during monsoons.
- **Construction Activities:** Increased construction, hydroelectric projects, and the widening of the NH have made the slopes highly unstable in the last couple of decades.
- **Land Erosion:** Due to the running streams from Vishnuprayag and sliding along the natural streams are the other reasons behind the city's fate.

▪ Impact:

- At least **66 families have fled the town while 561 houses have reported cracks.** A government official said that over 3000 people have been affected so far.

What can be done to save Joshimath?

- Experts recommend a **complete shutdown of development and hydroelectric projects in the region**. But the urgent need is to relocate the **residents to a safer place and then reimagine the town's planning** to accommodate the new variables and the changing geographical factors.
- Drainage planning is one of the biggest factors **that needs to be studied and redeveloped**. The city is suffering from poor drainage and sewer management as more and more waste is seeping into the soil, loosening it from within. The irrigation department has been asked by the state government to look into the issue and create a new plan for the drainage system.
- Experts have also suggested **replantation in the region, especially at the vulnerable sites to retain soil capacity**. There is a need for a coordinated effort between the government and civil bodies with the aid of military organizations like the [Border Roads Organisation \(BRO\)](#) to save Joshimath.
- While the state already has weather forecasting technology that can warn people of local events, **its coverage needs to be improved**.
 - Weather forecasting in Uttarakhand is done through satellites and Doppler weather radars (instruments that use electromagnetic energy to find precipitation and determine its location and intensity).
- The state government also **needs to take scientific studies more seriously, which clearly spell out the reasons for the current crisis**. Only then will the state put an end to its development frenzy.

What is Land Subsidence?

- Land subsidence is a gradual settling or sudden sinking of the Earth's surface.
- Subsidence - sinking of the ground because of underground material movement—is most often **caused by the removal of water, oil, natural gas, or mineral resources out of the ground** by pumping, fracking, or mining activities.
- Subsidence can also be caused by **natural events such as earthquakes, soil compaction, glacial isostatic adjustment, erosion**, sinkhole formation, and adding water to fine soils deposited by wind (a natural process known as loess deposits).
- Subsidence can happen over very large areas like whole states or provinces, or very small areas like the corner of your yard.

What is Landslide?

- A landslide is defined as the **movement of a mass of rock, debris, or earth down a slope**.
- They are a type of **mass wasting**, which denotes any downward movement of soil and rock under the direct influence of gravity.
- The term **landslide encompasses five modes of slope movement**: falls, topples, slides, spreads, and flows.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

- Q.** Bring out the causes for more frequent landslides in the Himalayas than in Western Ghats. **(2013)**
- Q.** Describe the various causes and the effects of landslides. Mention the important components of the National Landslide Risk Management Strategy. **(2021)**

[Source: TH](#)

Census

Prelims: Census 2011, SC, ST, Welfare Scheme, Government Planning, Public Distribution System.

Mains: Significance of Census.

Why in News?

Recently, the government has **extended the date for states and Union territories to finalise their administrative boundaries** by June 2023, which may delay the Census 2021 Exercise.

- During a Census operation – both the house-listing phase and the population enumeration — the states and Union territories are **not supposed to change the boundaries of districts, towns, villages and tehsils.**

What are the Implications of Delay?

- **Affect Political Representation:**
 - Census are used to determine the **number of seats to be reserved for SCs and STs in Parliament**, State legislatures, local bodies, and government services.
 - Therefore, delay in the Census means that the data from the 2011 Census would continue to be used.
 - In many towns and even panchayats that have seen rapid changes in the composition of their population over the last decade, this would mean **that either too many or too few seats are being reserved.**
- **Delimitation of Of Constituency:**
 - **Delimitation** of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies would continue to be based on 2001 Census till **data from a Census after 2026 are published.**
- **Unreliable Estimates on Welfare Measures:**
 - The delay will impact government schemes and programmes, and would result in **unreliable estimates from other surveys on consumption, health and employment**, which depend on census data to determine policy and welfare measures.
 - As many as 100 million people are likely being excluded from the government's food subsidy programme—the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**—as the population **figures used to calculate the number of beneficiaries are from the 2011 census.**
- **Impact Houselisting:**
 - It takes nearly a year to prepare an **abridged house list for the entire country which the enumerator uses to locate an address.**
 - The main purpose of the houselisting is **to prepare a list of all households that are to be surveyed before undertaking population enumeration**, besides providing data on housing stock, amenities and the assets available with each of the households.
 - The population enumeration **follows the houselisting after a year.**
 - So, for Census 2011, the government conducted houselisting between April and September 2010, and the population enumeration in February 2011.
 - Houselisting is important because unlike the US, India does not have a robust address system.
- **Migration:**
 - The images of migrant workers rushing out of the cities and walking the highways towards their villages during the first COVID lockdown brought their plight to the spotlight and raised queries on the numbers, **causes and patterns of migration, which could not be answered using outdated 2011 Census data.**
 - For example, the **Centre had no answers on how many migrants were likely**

- **to be stranded in each city or State** and in need of food relief or transport support.
- The new Census is likely to capture the extent of the observed movement in migration trends towards smaller two-tier towns apart from the large metropolitan centres.
 - It could help answer questions of what kind of healthcare and social services are most needed for migrants and where.

How is the 2021 Census being Different from Previous ones?

- For the first time the data is **collected digitally via mobile applications** (installed on enumerator's phone) with a provision of working in offline mode.
- The **Census Monitoring & Management Portal will act as a single source** for all officers/officials involved in Census activities to provide multi-language support.
- First time that information of a person from the **Transgender Community and members living in the family will be collected.**
 - Earlier there was a column for male and female only.

What is the Census?

- **Definition:**
 - **Population Census** is the total process of **collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating demographic**, economic and social data pertaining, at a specific time, of all persons in a country or a well-defined part of a country.
 - Census is the **basis for reviewing the country's progress in the past decade, monitoring the ongoing schemes** of the government and plan for the future
 - It provides an **instantaneous photographic picture of a community**, which is valid at a particular moment of time.
 - The census also provides **the trends in population characteristics.**
- **Frequency:**
 - **The exercise is undertaken every 10 years in India.**
 - The first complete census of an Indian city was conducted in 1830 by **Henry Walter (known as the father of the Indian Census)** in Dacca.
 - First non-synchronous Census was conducted in India in 1872 **during the reign of Governor-General Lord Mayo.**
 - The first synchronous census was taken in 1881, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
 - **Other Countries:**
 - Every 10 years in many countries (Ex. United States and Britain) and every **five years (Ex. Canada, Japan) or at irregular intervals** in some countries.
- **Nodal Ministry:**
 - The decennial Census is conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner**, Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - Until 1951, the Census Organisation was set up on an ad-hoc basis for each Census.
- **Legal/Constitutional Backing:**
 - Census is conducted under the provisions of the **Census Act, 1948.**
 - The bill for this Act was piloted by **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, the then Home Minister of India.
 - The population census is a **Union subject under Article 246** of India Constitution.
 - It is listed at serial number 69 of the **seventh schedule** of the constitution.
- **Confidentiality of Information:**
 - The information collected during the population Census is so confidential that it is not even accessible to the courts of law.
 - The confidentiality is guaranteed by the Census Act, 1948. The law specifies penalties for both public and census officials for non-compliance or violation of any provision of the Act.

What is the Significance of the Census?

- **Source of Information:**
 - The Indian Census is the **largest single source of a variety of statistical information** on different characteristics of the people of India.
 - Researchers and Demographers use census data to analyze growth and trends of population and make projections.
- **Good Governance:**
 - The data collected through the census is used for **administration, planning and policy making** as well as management and evaluation of various programmes by the Government.
- **Demarcation:**
 - Census data is also used for **demarcation of constituencies** and allocation of representation to Parliament, State legislative assemblies and the local bodies.
 - The Census data are also used to determine the **number of seats to be reserved for SCs and STs in Parliament, State legislatures, local bodies**, and government services.
 - In case of panchayats and municipal bodies, reservation of seats for SCs and STs is based on **their proportion in the population**.
- **Better Access for Businesses:**
 - The census data is also **important for business houses and industries for strengthening and planning** their business for penetration into areas, which had hitherto remained, uncovered.
- **Giving Grants:**
 - The Finance Commission provides grants to the **states on the basis of population figures available from the Census data**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Years Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2009)

1. Between Census 1951 and Census 2001, the density of the population of India has increased more than three times.
2. Between Census 1951 and Census 2001, the annual growth rate (exponential) of the population of India has doubled.

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)

[Source: TH](#)

Aspirational Blocks Programme

For Prelims: Aspirational Blocks Programme, Aspirational District Programme, SDG, NITI Aayog

For Mains: Government Policies and Interventions

Why in News?

Recently, Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP) has been launched during the 2nd National Conference of Chief Secretaries held from 5th January to 7th January, 2022.

What is Aspirational Blocks Programme?

- It is a development initiative aimed at **improving the performance of areas that are lagging on various development parameters.**
- It was announced in the **Union Budget 2022-23.**
- It will **initially cover 500 districts across 31 states and Union Territories, with over half of these blocks located in six states** – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.
- The ABP is based on the [Aspirational District Programme \(ADP\)](#).

What is Aspirational District Programme?

- **About:**
 - It was launched in 2018 which aims to **transform districts** that have shown relatively **lesser progress in key social areas.**
 - Aspirational Districts are those districts in India, that **are affected by poor socio-economic indicators.**
 - It covers 112 districts across the country.
 - At Government of India level, **programme is anchored by NITI Aayog.** In addition, individual Ministries have assumed responsibility to drive progress of districts.
- **Broad Contours of the Programme:**
 - **Convergence** (of Central & State Schemes)
 - **Collaboration** (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors),
 - Competition among districts through monthly **delta ranking.**
 - The delta ranking of the Aspirational Districts combines the **innovative use of data with pragmatic administration**, keeping the district at the locus of inclusive development.
- **Objectives:**
 - It focuses **on the strength of each district, identifying low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement and measuring progress** by ranking districts on a monthly basis.
 - Districts are prodded and encouraged to first catch up with the best district within their state, and subsequently aspire to become one of the best in the country, by **competing with, and learning from others** in the **spirit of competitive & cooperative federalism.**
 - The Government is committed to raising the living standards of its citizens and ensuring inclusive growth for all – **“Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas aur Sabka Vishwas”.**
 - The ADP is essentially aimed at **localizing Sustainable Development Goals, leading to the progress of the nation.**
- **Parameters for Ranking:**
 - The ranking is based on the incremental progress made across 49 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under **5 broad socio-economic themes** -
 - **Health & Nutrition (30%)**
 - **Education (30%)**
 - **Agriculture & Water Resources (20%)**
 - **Financial Inclusion & Skill Development (10%)**
 - **Infrastructure (10%)**
- **Various Programmes:**
 - Various programmes such as – **Saksham Bitiyan Abhiyan, Anemia Mukht Bharat and Surakshit Hum Surakshit Tum,** are some of the flagship initiatives that have been taken up by **NITI Aayog** in this regard.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Years Question (PYQ)

Q. Atal Innovation Mission is set up under the (2019)

- (a) Department of Science and Technology
- (b) Ministry of Labour and Employment
- (c) NITI Aayog
- (d) Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is a flagship initiative set up by the NITI Aayog to promote innovation and entrepreneurship based on a detailed study and deliberations on innovation and entrepreneurial needs of the country.
- AIM is envisaged as an umbrella innovation organization that would play an instrumental role in alignment of innovation policies between Central, State and sectoral innovation schemes incentivizing the establishment and promotion of an ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship at various levels – higher secondary schools, science, engineering and higher academic institutions, SME/MSME industry, corporate and NGO levels.
- **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

Source: IE

Make in India

For Prelims: Make in India, Foreign Direct Investment, Ease of Doing Business, Production Linked Incentive (PLI), National Single Window System (NSWS), One-District-One-Product (ODOP)

For Mains: Significance of Make in India in Transforming Indian Economy

Why in News?

Recently, **over a dozen “restrictive and discriminatory” conditions** which prevented local suppliers from participating in the bidding process **were flagged by the Union Government to boost ‘Make in India’** initiative.

- These conditions were **in violation of the Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order, 2017, issued to protect the interests** of local suppliers and to **promote manufacturing and production of goods and services in India** with a view to enhance income & employment.

What is Make in-India Programme?

- **About:**
 - **Launched in 2014**, Make in India aims to **transform the country into a leading global**

manufacturing and investment destination.

- It is being led by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, Government of India.
- The initiative is an open invitation to potential investors and partners across the globe to participate in the growth story of 'New India'.
- Make In India has **substantial accomplishments across 27 sectors under Make in India 2.0** which include strategic sectors of manufacturing and services as well.

▪ **Objectives:**

- To **attract foreign investment for [new industrialisation](#)** and develop the already existing industry base in India to surpass that of China.
- Target of an **increase in manufacturing sector growth to 12-14% per annum** over the medium term
- To **increase the share of [manufacturing](#) sector in the country's Gross Domestic Product from 16% to 25% by 2022**
- To **create 100 million additional jobs by 2022.**
- To **promote export-led growth.**

▪ **Four Pillars:**

◦ **New Processes:**

- 'Make in India' **recognizes '[Ease of Doing Business](#)'** as the single most important factor to promote entrepreneurship for which a **number of initiatives have already been undertaken.**
- The aim is to **de-license and de-regulate the industry** during the entire life cycle of a business.

◦ **New Infrastructure:**

- The government intends to develop **industrial corridors, strengthen existing infrastructure, and design a fast-paced registration system** as part of its commitment to the growth of the industry.

◦ **New Sectors:**

- 'Make in India' has identified **27 sectors in manufacturing, infrastructure and service activities** and detailed **information is being shared through interactive web-portal** and professionally developed brochures.

◦ **New Mindset:**

- 'Make in India' intends to bring a **paradigm shift in how Government interacts with industry.**
- The **Government will partner industry** in economic development of the country and the **approach will be that of a facilitator and not regulator.**

▪ **Outcomes:**

- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Inflows:** To attract foreign investments, **Government of India has put in place a liberal and transparent policy** wherein **most sectors are open to [FDI](#)** under the automatic route.
 - FDI inflows in India stood at USD 45.15 billion in 2014-2015 and have since consecutively reached record FDI inflows for eight years.
 - The year 2021-22 recorded the **highest ever FDI at USD 83.6 billion**
 - On the back of **economic reforms and Ease of Doing Business in recent years, India is on track to attract USD 100 Billion in FDI** in the current Financial Year (2022-23)
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI):** The **[Production Linked Incentive \(PLI\)](#)** scheme across 14 key manufacturing sectors, was launched in 2020-21 as a big boost to the Make in India initiative.

▪ **Related Initiatives:**

- **[National Single Window System \(NSWS\)](#)**
- **[PM Gati Shakti Programme](#)**
- **[One-District-One-Product \(ODOP\)](#)**
- **Scheme for building Semiconductor Ecosystem:** Recognising the importance of semiconductors in the world economy, the Government has launched a USD 10 billion incentive scheme to build a semiconductor, display, and design ecosystem in India.

Prelims

Q. What is/are the recent policy initiative(s) of Government of India to promote the growth of manufacturing sector? (2012)

1. Setting up of National Investment and Manufacturing Zones
2. Providing the benefit of 'single window clearance'
3. Establishing the Technology Acquisition and Development Fund

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- National Investment and Manufacturing Zone is a new concept which is an integral part of the National Manufacturing Policy, 2011. The National Manufacturing Policy is a policy tool to be applied to select zones designated for promoting manufacturing. **Hence, 1 is correct.**
- The 'single window clearance' has been provided, which will cut red tapism and facilitate investment and ease of doing business in the country. **Hence, 2 is correct.**
- The Technology Acquisition and Development Fund (TADF) was launched under the National Manufacturing Policy. TADF is a new scheme to facilitate acquisition of Clean, Green and Energy Efficient Technologies, in the form of Technology/ Customised Products/Specialised Services/Patents/ Industrial Design available in the market in India or globally, by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Hence, 3 is correct.
- The Scheme is conceptualised to catalyse the manufacturing growth in the MSME sector to contribute to the national focus of "Make in India". **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. "Success of 'Make in India' program depends on the success of 'Skill India' programme and radical labour reforms." Discuss with logical arguments. (2019)

Source: TH

Ban on Wheat Export

For Prelims: National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKAY).

For Mains: Reasons for Banning of Export of Wheat, Current Scenario of Wheat Distribution Across India.

Why in News?

The government is **considering lifting a ban on [wheat exports](#)** and is looking at the current supply of wheat in the central pool and the distribution needs under the **[National Food Security Act \(NFSA\), 2013](#)**.

- Due to the recent discontinuation of the [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana \(PMGKAY\)](#), the **overall distribution of wheat is expected to be lower**.

What is the Current Scenario of Wheat Distribution Across the Country?

- India is the **world's second-biggest wheat producer after China**. But it accounts for less than 1% of the global wheat trade. It keeps a lot of it to **provide subsidised food for the poor**.
- Its **top export markets are** Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka - as well as the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- According to the [Food Corporation of India \(FCI\)](#), **wheat stocks have been decreasing at a rate of 2 million tonnes per month** over the last six months and are currently the lowest in six years.
 - The **government is considering lifting the ban on wheat exports once stocks are sufficient** and to ensure that food security is maintained.
- The government has **taken a number of measures to address concerns about low wheat procurement and rising wheat prices. These measures include:**
 - Reducing wheat allocation to some states and territories, increasing the allocation of rice, **[banning the export of broken non-basmati rice](#)**, and considering open market sales to keep prices in check.
- The **wheat output for the year 2023 is expected to be better than last year**, which could help increase the wheat supply in the market.

What are the Reasons for the Banning of Export of Wheat?

- **Price of Wheat Globally:** India **suspended the export of wheat in May 2022**. In a notification published in the government gazette, the [Directorate General of Foreign Trade \(DGFT\)](#) justified the ban by giving reasons that **soaring global wheat prices have put pressure on food security, not only in India but also in neighbouring and vulnerable nations**.
 - However, the export will be allowed on the basis of **permission granted by the Government of India to other countries to meet their food security needs** and based on the request of their governments.
- **Impact on Wheat Production:** The ban also **prompted a decrease in wheat production**, after its production was affected by a [heatwave](#) that swept across the country during March-April 2022, while the FCI was **unable to accumulate adequate buffer stocks**.
- **Rising Inflation:** The [rising inflation](#) also prompted this step. The [Wholesale Price Index \(WPI\)](#) in India has moved up from 2.26% at the start of 2022 to 14.55 (May 2022). Retail inflation, too, hit an eight-year high of 7.79% in April, 2022 **driven by rising food and fuel prices**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidised food grains
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. Hunger and Poverty are the biggest challenges for good governance in India still today. Evaluate how far successive governments have progressed in dealing with these humongous problems. Suggest measures for improvement. (2017)

Q. What are the reformative steps taken by the Government to make the food grain distribution system more effective? (2019)

[Source: IE](#)

17th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas Convention

Why in News?

[Pravasi Bharatiya Divas \(PBD\)](#) is celebrated on 9th January to mark the contribution of the [Overseas Indian community](#) to the development of India.

- The Prime Minister **inaugurated the 17th three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in Indore, Madhya Pradesh** and a digital exhibition on the **contribution of the diaspora in the freedom struggle**. He also released a commemorative stamp, 'Surakshit Jaayen, Prashikshit Jaayen' on the occasion.

What is Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas?

- **Background:**
 - 9th January **was chosen as the day to celebrate PBD since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.**
 - This **day came into effect in 2003, but in 2015 it was revised and was decided to be celebrated every two years.** It was then a theme-based conference that was set up every year during the interim period.
 - PBD Conventions are held once every two years.
 - **PBD 2023: The theme is "Diaspora: Reliable partners for India's progress in Amrit Kaal".**
 - On this day, the Government also **confers Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award.**
 - It is the **highest honour conferred on a Non-Resident Indian (NRI), Person of Indian Origin (PIO);** or an organisation or institution established and **run by NRI OR PIO, who have made significant contributions to a better understanding of India abroad,** support India's causes and concerns in a tangible way.
- **Significance:**

- This day plays a significant role as the overseas Indian community gets a shared platform **to get themselves engaged with the government and the native people of the land.**
- The conventions are very useful in **networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world** and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

What are the Government Initiatives related to Overseas Indians?

- **Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** To institutionalize the process of skill development of emigrant Indian workers.
- **Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC):** 100 scholarships per annum are granted to **PIO and NRI students** for undergraduate courses.
- **Know India Program' (KIP):** It familiarizes Indian-origin youth (18-30 years) with their Indian roots and contemporary India.
- **E-migrate System:** It is a foreign employers database. It ensures the welfare and check on exploitation met to emigrants.
- **VAJRA (Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty) Scheme:** It formalizes a rotation program wherein top NRI scientists, engineers, doctors, managers and professionals serve Indian public sector organizations for a brief period, lending their expertise.

[Source: PIB](#)

iVOFm Technique to Decontaminate Water

Why in News?

In order to tackle the problem of [water contamination](#) and **enhance access to clean and drinkable water**, the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune has introduced a **macro/microporous ionic organic framework - iVOFm** - to clean polluted water.

What is iVOFm?

- **Viologen-unit grafted organic-framework (iVOFm)** is a **unique molecular sponge-like material to clean polluted water by soaking up the contaminants in it.**
 - There are carcinogenic pollutants in freshwater sources that are removed using **sorbent materials** and **ion-exchange techniques**, but these techniques are not effective enough. iVOFm aims to improve this.
- iVOFm employs **amalgamation of electrostatics driven ion-exchange** combined with **nanometer-sized macropores and specific binding sites** for the targeted pollutants.
 - The **inherent cationic nature** of iVOFm and **macroporosity (cavities >75 μm)** allows fast diffusion of pollutants (organic+inorganic, **>93% removal in 30 seconds**).
 - Unlike normal sorbent materials, this material is found to be **very selective toward toxic pollutants**. It **can be used several times** just like a bath sponge.

What is the Ion-Exchange Technique?

- **Ion Exchange (IX)** is a process of deionisation where **dissolved impurity ions** in water are **replaced by hydrogen and hydroxyl ions**, purifying the water.
- Water softeners are very similar to IX systems since both systems can **remove magnesium and**

calcium ions from the water.

[Source: TH](#)

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

Kerala to Provide Pension to MGNREGS Workers

In a **first of its kind initiative**, the Kerala govt. has launched a **welfare fund board for the workers** registered for the **MGNREGS** and Kerala govt.'s **Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme**. They will receive a **monthly pension** from the board once they turn 60.

As per the norm, **any worker (age 18-55)** can take membership in the fund board. They have to pay a **monthly premium amount (₹50 tentatively fixed) until the age of 55** and a member who has paid the **contribution for at least 10 years will be eligible** for pension. Apart from the workers' monthly contribution, the **govt. will also make an equivalent contribution** towards the fund (which may be **revised triannually**).

Read More - [MGNREGS](#)

'Saharsh' Scheme for Social and Emotional Learning

The **state govt. of Tripura**, in an effort to encourage social and emotional learning, introduced a special education programme - 'Saharsh'. Launched in pilot mode in Aug 2022 in 40 schools, now it will be **extended to all govt. and aided schools** of the state. It aimed at empowering children to learn with happiness. **Tripura currently ranks in the Grade-I** category in the **Performance Grading Index**.

Read More - [Performance Grading Index](#)

First Advance Estimates of GDP

The **National Statistical Office (NSO)**, recently released the **first advance estimates (FAEs) of national income (GDP)** according to which the **Indian economy is expected to grow at 7%** in FY 22-23 (up from 6.8% projected by MPC).

The **economy grew by 9.7% in the first half** of FY 22-23 which is likely to slow down to 4.5 % in the second half. **India will still be one of the fastest-growing economies** in the world.

The FAE, first introduced in 2016-17, are the "first" official estimates of how GDP is expected to grow in that FY. FAEs provide some sense of underlying momentum in economic activities and are **useful in the context of the upcoming [Union Budget](#)**.

Read More - [First Advance Estimates for GDP](#)
