



Melting of West Antarctica's Ice Sheet

For Prelims: [Antarctic Treaty](#), [National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research](#), [Indian Antarctic Act of 2022](#)
Maitri, Bharati, Dakshin Gangotri

For Mains: Processes Driving West Antarctic Ice Sheet Melting, Actions that India has Taken Related to Antarctica, Conservation.

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

A recent study reveals alarming predictions about the [West Antarctic ice sheet's inevitable melting](#) due to warming ocean waters.

- The implications of this melting are profound, with the **potential to significantly elevate [global mean sea levels](#) by 5.3 meters**, adversely affecting millions of individuals residing in vulnerable [coastal cities](#) worldwide, **including those in India.**

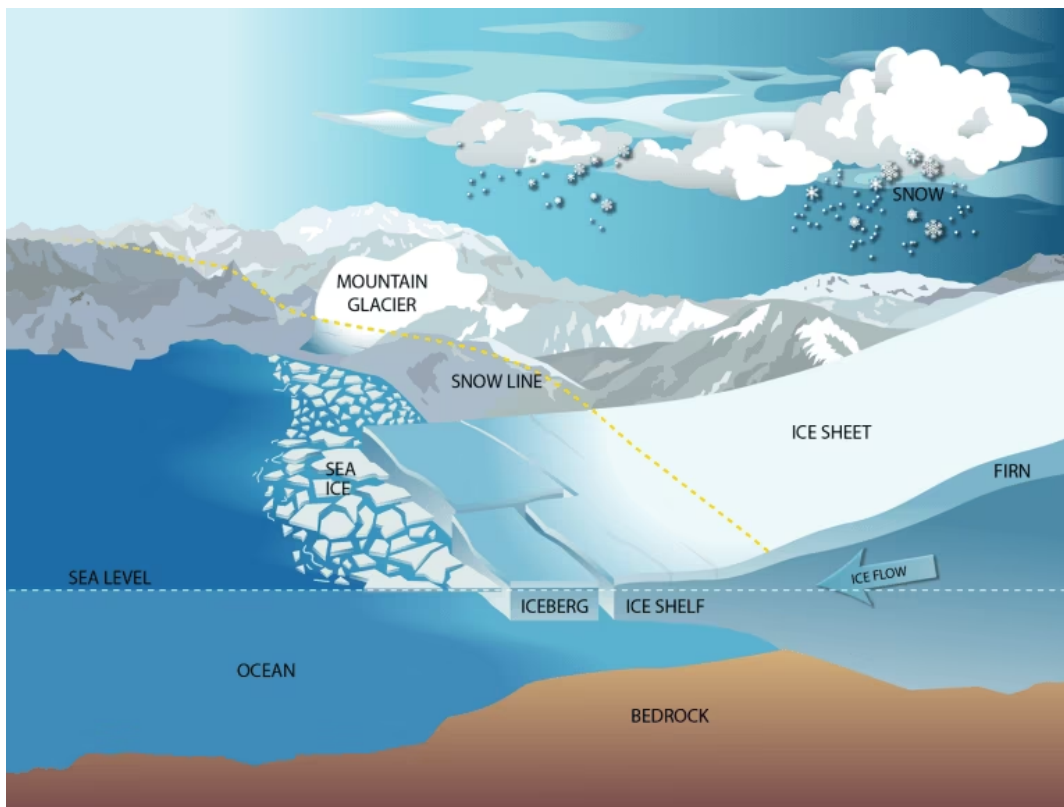
What do Ice Sheets Represent and How Do They Affect Sea Levels?

- **About:**
 - An ice sheet is essentially a mass of glacial ice that covers more than 50,000 square kilometers of land.
 - An ice sheet, such as the **West Antarctic ice sheet**, covers vast land areas, holding a substantial amount of [freshwater](#).
 - The two major ice sheets in the world, **Greenland and Antarctica**, collectively possess around **two-thirds of the Earth's freshwater**.
 - When ice sheets gain or lose mass, they respectively **contribute to a fall or rise in global mean sea levels.**

Note

The present Antarctic ice sheet accounts for 90% of Earth's total ice volume.

//



▪ Processes Driving West Antarctic Ice Sheet Melting:

- Ice shelves stabilize the land-based glaciers just behind them. The melting of ice sheets occurs through various mechanisms. One key process involves **warm ocean waters eroding ice shelves**, which are the edges of an **ice sheet** floating on the ocean.
- As these ice shelves thin or disintegrate, the **glaciers behind them accelerate**, releasing **more ice into the ocean** and consequently causing sea level rise.

Note

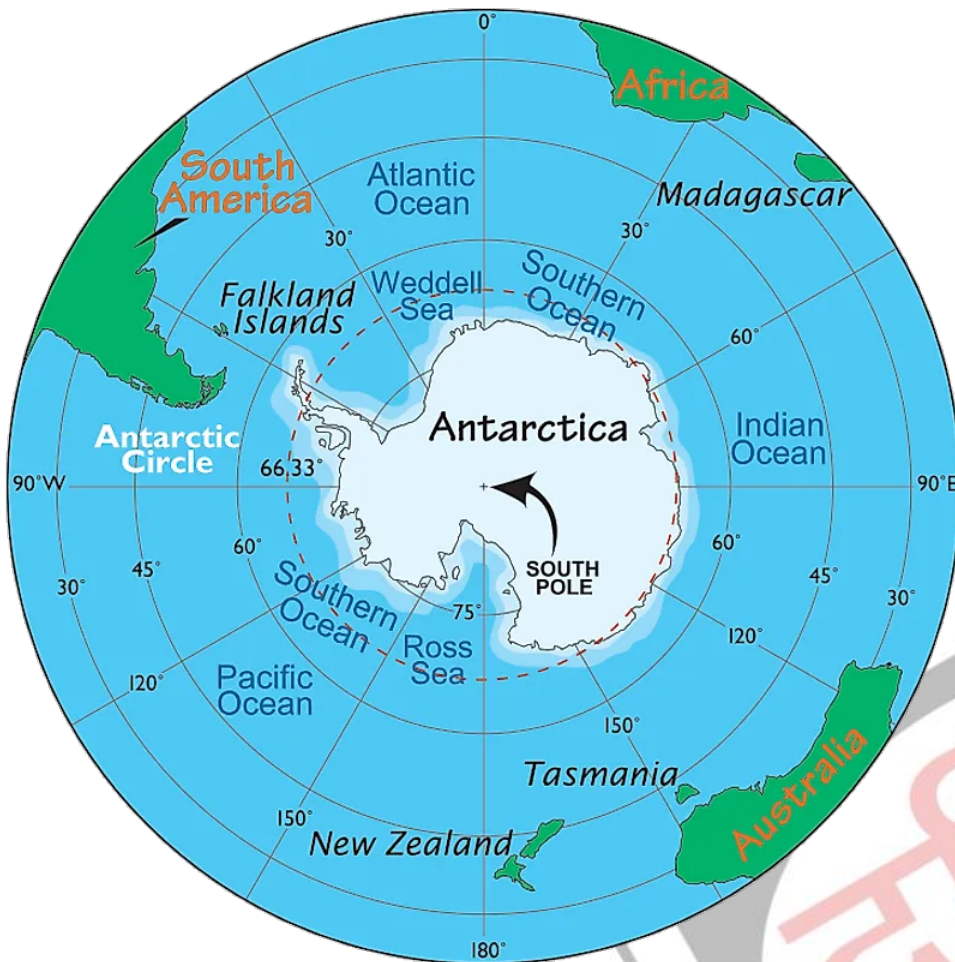
Ice shelves and ice sheets differ from **sea ice**, which constitutes the free-floating ice encircling the polar regions. Sea ice forms when seawater freezes.

▪ Current Trends and Findings:

- The recent findings are distressing, indicating a significant, **widespread warming of the Amundsen Sea** and escalating ice shelf melting across all scenarios considered.
- This projected melting will **inevitably lead to increased sea level rise**, profoundly impacting coastal communities worldwide.

▪ Implications for India and Vulnerable Coastal Regions:

- India, with its extensive coastline and dense population, is particularly susceptible to sea level rise.
- Coastal communities **might face displacement or become climate refugees** if unable to fortify against rising seas, highlighting the **urgency for adaptive strategies** such as building protective infrastructure.



What Actions has India Taken Related to Antarctica?

- India acceded to the [Antarctic Treaty](#) in **1983**, received the consultative status on the **12th September, 1983**.
- [National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research](#) (erstwhile National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research) is India's premier R&D institution responsible for the country's research activities in the Polar and Southern Ocean realms.
- The [Indian Antarctic Act of 2022](#) regulates visits and activities in Antarctica, covering mineral protection, native plant conservation, and banning non-native bird introductions.
- Presently, India has **two operational research stations at Antarctica - Maitri and Bharati**.
 - **Dakshin Gangotri** was the first station to be built before **1985** but is **no longer operational**.

Way Forward

- **Environmental Protection and Conservation:** Strict adherence to the **Antarctic Treaty and associated agreements** for preserving the continent's unique environment and ecosystems.
 - This involves regulating human activities, waste management, and minimizing the environmental footprint.
- **Innovative Materials and Infrastructure:** Developing more **efficient materials and infrastructure for research stations** and vessels operating in harsh polar conditions, ensuring **minimal environmental impact**.
- **Geoengineering Techniques:** Researchers are exploring **solar radiation management to potentially slow ice melting**. In a scenario of moderated emissions, solar radiation management could be a **potent weapon against ice sheet degradation**.
 - However, these experimental methods require further investigation for efficacy and

environmental effects before implementation.

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

Q. With reference to the water on the planet Earth, consider the following statements:(2021)

1. The amount of water in the rivers and lakes is more than the amount of groundwater.
2. The amount of water in polar ice caps and glaciers is more than the amount of groundwater.

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: (b)

Tightening Regulations for Appointing State DGPs

For Prelims: [Union Public Service Commission](#), Committee to Appoint the State DGP, [Prakash Singh Case 2006](#), Police Establishment Board

For Mains: Key Amendments in UPSC Guidelines for DGP Selection, Police Reforms in India.

Source: [TH](#)

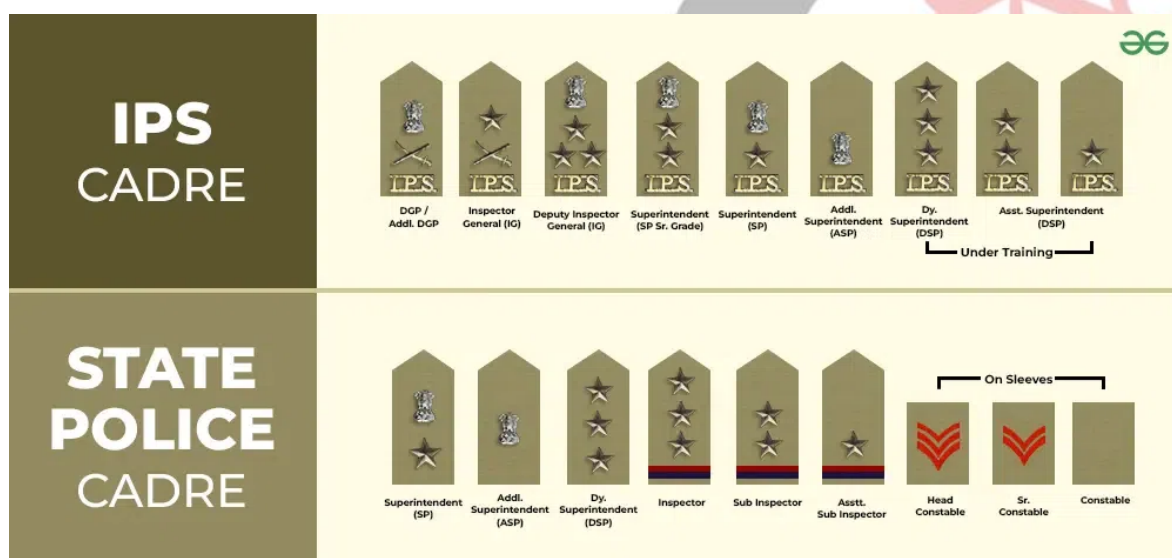
Why in News?

Recently, the [Union Public Service Commission \(UPSC\)](#) has issued amended guidelines emphasizing specific criteria for the [appointment of State Directors General of Police \(DGPs\)](#).

What are the Key Amendments in UPSC Guidelines for DGP Selection?

- **Clarity in Selection Norms:**
 - The amendments introduced by the **UPSC aim to bring transparency** to the previously implicit norms governing the selection process for **State Directors General of Police (DGPs)**.
 - The guidelines now explicitly state criteria to **prevent favoritism and unfair appointments**.
- **Service Tenure Requirement:**
 - The guidelines stipulate that **only officers with a minimum of six months of service** left before retirement will be considered for the position of State DGP.
 - This move aims to **discourage the practice of extending tenures by appointing "favorite officers"** on the verge of retirement, thereby promoting a fair and unbiased selection.
 - Previously, several states had appointed DGPs who were about to retire, and **some had resorted to appointing acting DGPs** to avoid the UPSC selection process.

- **Revised Experience Criteria:**
 - Previously set at a minimum of **30 years of service**, the guidelines now allow officers with **25 years** of experience to qualify for the DGP position. This alteration broadens the pool of eligible candidates.
- **Limit on Shortlisted Officers:**
 - The guidelines set a **cap of three shortlisted officers** for the DGP position, allowing exceptions only under specific circumstances.
 - It emphasizes **voluntary participation**, requiring officers to express their willingness to be considered for the position.
- **Specified Areas of Expertise:**
 - The new guidelines **define essential areas of experience necessary for an IPS officer** aspiring to **lead a State Police Department**.
 - These areas include a **minimum of ten years of experience in crucial domains** such as law and order, crime branch, economic offenses wing, or intelligence wing.
 - Alongside specific areas, the guidelines also stress the **need for deputation to central bodies such as the Intelligence Bureau, Research and Analysis Wing, or [Central Bureau of Investigation](#)**.
 - The goal is to ensure a comprehensive and varied range of experience among candidates vying for the DGP position.
- **Empanelment Committee's Limits on Assessment:**
 - Empanelment Committee established by the UPSC for the appointment of State DGP will **refrain from assessing IPS officers on central deputation for the State DGP position** if the Union Ministry of Home Affairs informs the State government that releasing the officers is not feasible.



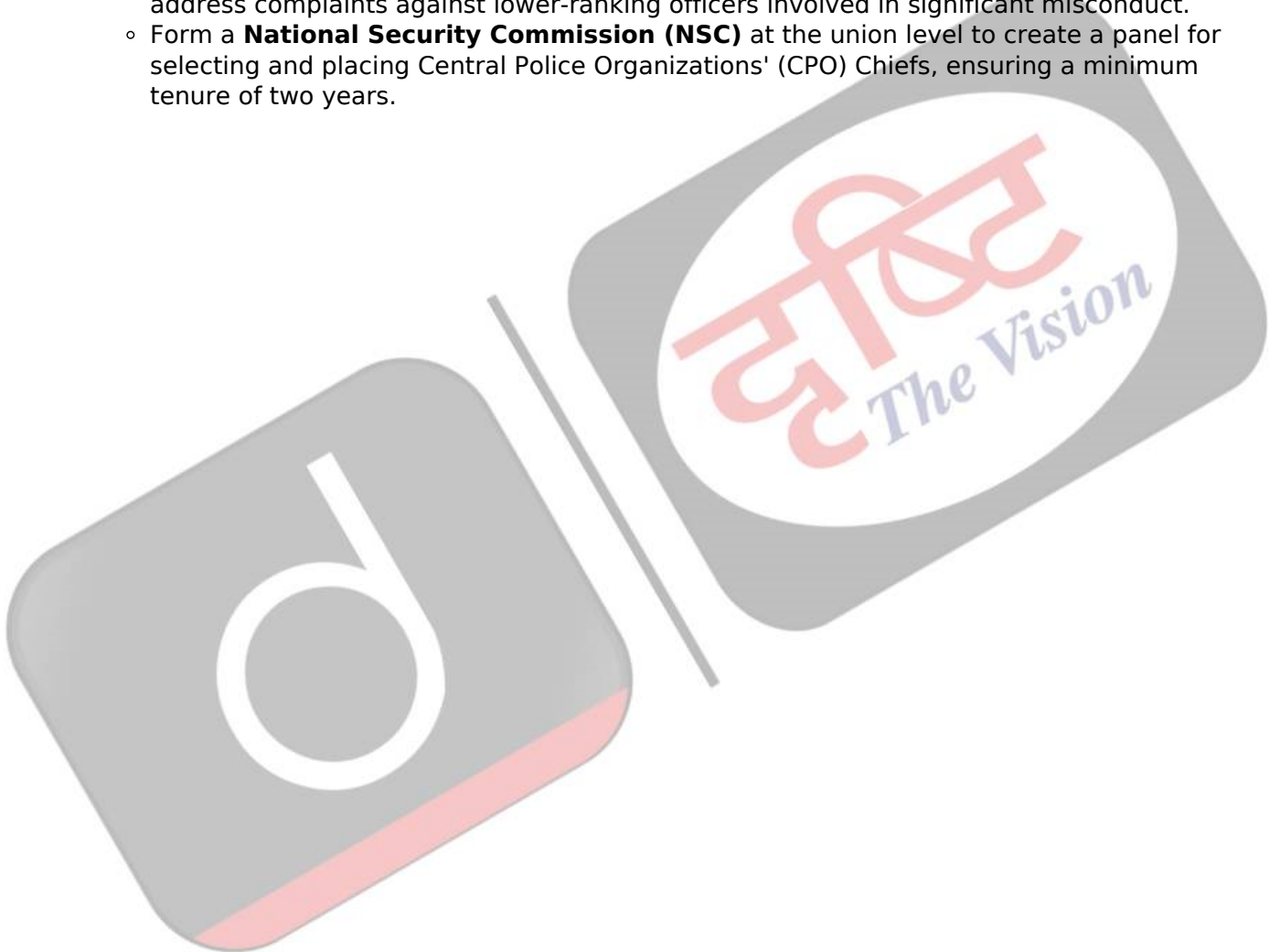
What are the Supreme Court's Directives on Police Reforms?

- In the [Prakash Singh Case 2006](#), the Supreme Court issued **seven directives** to drive **police reforms in India**, acknowledging widespread issues such as politicization, **lack of accountability, and systemic weaknesses** impacting overall police performance.
- **The directives include:**
 - Establish a **State Security Commission (SSC)** with the objectives of preventing undue government influence on the police, outlining policy guidelines, and assessing state police performance.
 - Ensure the **appointment of the DGP through a transparent, merit-based process**, ensuring a minimum tenure of two years.
 - **Committee to Appoint State DGP:**
 - The committee to appoint the State DGP is headed by the **UPSC Chairman** and includes the Union Home Secretary, the State's Chief Secretary and DGP, and one of the heads of the [Central Armed Police Forces](#) nominated by the **Ministry of Home Affairs who is not from the same**

State cadre.

- **Procedure of Selection:**

- The State governments concerned have to **send UPSC the names of the probables** three months before the incumbent DGPs are to retire.
 - The UPSC will prepare a panel of three officers fit to be DGP and send it back.
 - The State, in turn, shall appoint one of the persons shortlisted by the UPSC.
- Ensure a **minimum two-year tenure for other operational police officers**, including District Superintendents and Station House Officers.
 - Implement the **segregation of investigative and law enforcement duties** within the police force.
 - Create a **Police Establishment Board (PEB)** to handle transfers, postings, promotions, and other service-related matters for officers below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police, while also making recommendations for higher-ranking transfers.
 - Establish a **State-level Police Complaints Authority (PCA)** to investigate public complaints against senior police officers for serious misconduct, and district-level PCAs to address complaints against lower-ranking officers involved in significant misconduct.
 - Form a **National Security Commission (NSC)** at the union level to create a panel for selecting and placing Central Police Organizations' (CPO) Chiefs, ensuring a minimum tenure of two years.



Police Reforms in India



CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

- Police and Public Order: State subjects (7th Schedule)



NEED FOR REFORM

- Colonial Law
- Custodial Death
- Lack of Accountability
- Political Interference
- Poor Gender Sensitivity
- Communal/Caste Bias
- No Anti-Torture Law



RELATED DATA

- Police-People Ratio:** 153 police/100,000 people (Global benchmark: 222 police /100,000 people)
- Custodial Deaths:** 175 in 2021-2022 (as per MHA)
- Women's Share:** 10.5% of entire force (India Justice Report 2021)
- Infrastructure:** 1 in 3 police stations is equipped with CCTV (India Justice Report 2021)



IMPORTANT COMMITTEES/COMMISSION



RELATED INITIATIVES

- SMART Policing** (pan-India)
- Automated Multimodal Biometric Identification System (**AMBIS**) (Maharashtra)
- Real Time Visitor Monitoring System** (uses **AI and blockchain**) (Andhra Pradesh)
- CyberDome** (Tech R&D Centre) (Kerala)

WAY FORWARD

- ↑ Police Budget, Resources
- ↑ Recruitment Process
- Implement Measures to Reduce Corruption
- ↑ Skills of Policemen
- Better Representation (Women, Minorities)



CHALLENGES WITH POLICING

- Low Police-Population Ratio
- Political Superimposition
- Unsatisfactory Police-Public Relations
- Infra Deficit
- Corruption
- Understaffed/Overburdened



The Indian Railways' Revenue Problems

For Prelims: [Indian Railways \(IR\)](#), [Capital Expenditure \(capex\)](#), [Gross Budgetary Support \(GBS\)](#), [Extra Budgetary Resources \(EBS\)](#), [Comptroller and Auditor General of India \(CAG\)](#), Net Tonne Kilometres (NTKM), [Operating Ratio](#).

For Mains: Significant role and contribution of Indian Railways to the economic growth and development.

Source: TH

Why in News?

The [Indian Railways \(IR\)](#) has increased its [capital expenditure \(capex\)](#) significantly since merging its rail budget with the main budget. However, its [operating ratio](#), which measures expenses against revenue, hasn't improved.

What are the Present Concerns with Indian Railways?

▪ Debt Trap Concerns:

- The Indian Railways (IR) is facing a **growing concern related to rising debt**. In the absence of surplus funds, the IR has been relying on increased funding through [Gross Budgetary Support \(GBS\) and Extra Budgetary Resources \(EBS\)](#).
 - However, this reliance on EBS comes with a significant cost. The IR's spending on repayment of principal and interest make 17% of revenue receipts, a sharp rise from less than 10% till 2015-16.

▪ Concerns Related to Economic Growth vis-a-vis Unproductive Investments:

- Despite the mounting debt, the significant increase in capex is underpinned by the belief that investments in the railway sector have a **positive ripple effect on manufacturing, services, government tax revenue, and employment opportunities**.
 - However, **it is imperative that the IR, as a vital organization, avoids following the path of financial instability seen in entities like Air India.**

▪ The Lessening Share:

- The Indian Railways (IR) faces a significant challenge with its **share in transporting key commodities declining over the years**.
 - For instance, **in 2011**, coal transportation was 602 million tonnes (MT), with the rail share at 70%, but by 2020, coal consumption increased to 978 MT, while the rail share **decreased to 60%**.
 - Similarly, **the share of exim (Export-Import) containers moving to and from ports has fluctuated between 10% and 18% since 2009-10**, with the 2021-22 figure at 13%.

▪ Concerns with Net Tonne Kilometers (NTKM):

- There was an unprecedented decline in NTKM in 2015-16 and 2016-17 by 4% and 5% respectively.
 - In the **seven-year period ending in 2021-22**, NTKM showed an annual growth rate of 3.5%, **significantly lower** than the growth rate in road transport.

What are the Long-Term Issues in the Indian Railway System?

▪ Challenges in Financial Performance:

- The IR **faces a significant problem** with its financial performance, particularly the stark contrast between its profitable freight segment and the loss-making passenger segment.
 - A 2023 report from the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) highlighted a massive loss of Rs. 68,269 crore in passenger services which had to be covered by profits from freight traffic.

▪ Challenges in Freight Business:

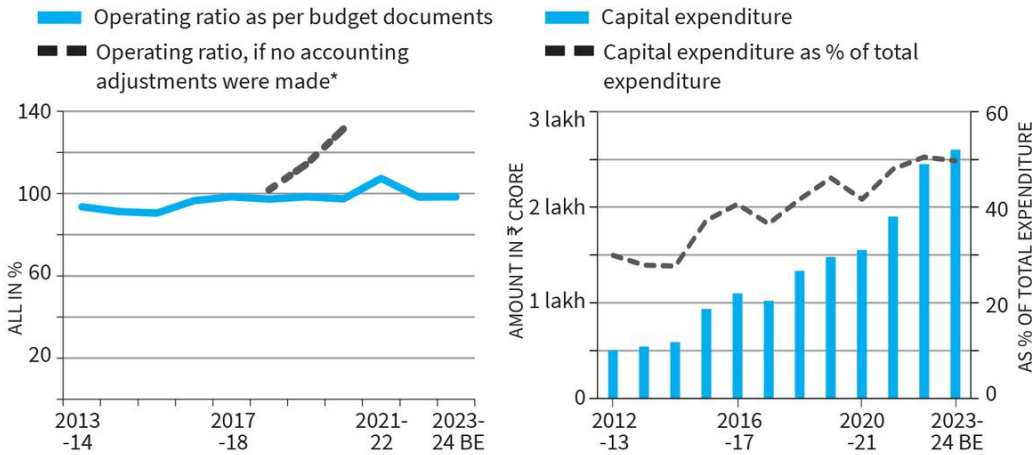
- From April to July 2023, the annual growth in **freight volume and revenue stands at just 1% and 3%**, respectively, **whereas the Indian economy is growing at 7%**.
 - The modal share of the IR in India's freight business has drastically **decreased to approximately 27%**, a **significant decline from the over 80% share** it had at the time of India's independence.

▪ Artificial Division of Cargo:

- The **artificial division of cargo into goods and parcels is hindering efficiency**. These divisions, driven by tariff rules, handling procedures, and monitoring practices, **do not align with the concerns of shippers**.
 - It is **essential for the IR to abandon this artificial divide and categorize cargo based on its characteristics as either bulk or non-bulk**, which could be referred to as value-added.

▪ Challenges in Competing with Road Transport:

- The Indian Railways also faces competition from road transport, which has been growing at a faster rate than rail transport. This competition, **combined with the fluctuating Net Tonne Kilometres (NTKM)**, has made it challenging for the IR to maintain and expand its share in freight transportation, where overhaul in railway transportation is required.
- **Inadequacy of Containerization:**
 - After 15 years of privatization, containerized domestic cargo **accounts for only 1% of IR's loading and 0.3% of the country's total freight.**
 - High haulage rates and the risk of market development with potential losses are contributing to this underperformance.



What are the Ways to Ease and Improve the Transport of Cargo by Indian Railways?

- **Need to Phase Out Parcel Trains:**
 - The IR is facing **challenges in moving general cargo using parcel trains and special heavy parcel van (VPH) trains.**
 - One of the key reasons for these challenges is the high tariff, which is often higher than truck rates.
 - The VPH parcel trains are found to be counterproductive, and **there is a better alternative in the form of covered wagons that can carry more cargo efficiently.**
- **Need of Flexibility for Shippers:**
 - A significant issue for the IR is that **shippers can only send a few tonnes under parcel tariff or thousands of tonnes under freight tariff, making it unsuitable for the needs of general cargo.**
 - Shippers require a more flexible and suitable option that aligns with their cargo sizes, akin to **asking passengers to come with a load of passengers** before booking a berth on a passenger train.
- **Overcoming Challenges in Cargo Transportation:**
 - The declining share of the IR in bulk cargo is partly **due to the high cost and capital-intensive nature of railway sidings**, which discourages smaller industries from using them.
 - To address this, **common-user facilities at cargo aggregation and dispersal points are needed**, especially in mining clusters, industrial areas, and large cities.
- **Ensuring a Level Playing Field Between Rail and Road Transportation:**
 - Environmental clearance for rail loading/unloading facilities has been made mandatory but the same has not been imposed on road loading/unloading facilities. There is a need for consistent Environmental regulations.
- **Optimization of Tarrifs:**
 - To incentivize **volumetric loading**, tariff structures can be adjusted based on the quantity loaded. The IR should also encourage **cargo aggregators and optimize payload** and speed for better efficiency in the long run.
- **Modernization of Infrastructure:**
 - Urgent need for infrastructure modernization in railways, including **high-speed rail**,

station redevelopment, track doubling, coach refurbishing, GPS tracking, and digitalization for safety, efficiency, and cost reduction.

▪ **Reduction in operational costs:**

- Indian Railways has achieved an Operating Ratio of 98.14% which can be further improved by **focusing on energy conservation, optimizing manpower, and enhancing procurement practices.**

What are the Different Initiatives of Railways for Increasing Bulk Cargo?

- The Indian Railways (IR) has undertaken several initiatives in the **bulk cargo sector, including relaxing block rake movement rules, allowing mini rakes, and introducing private freight terminals (PFTs).**
- The **Gati Shakti Terminal (GCT)** policy simplifies the operation of these terminals, and private sidings are being converted into GCTs.
- Government of India has introduced two key policies: The **PM GatiShakti (PMGS) policy**, aimed at creating a seamless multi-modal transport network, and the **National Logistics Policy (NLP)**, focusing on building a national logistics portal and integrating platforms across various ministries
- **Investment in railway infrastructure:** The government has also introduced schemes such as **'Sagarmala'** and **'Bharatmala'** for port-led development and road development respectively **which must be integrated with Indian Railways.**
- **Dedicated Freight Corridors:** The government has also introduced schemes such as **'Dedicated Freight Corridors'** which should be leveraged to increase freight transportation.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to bio-toilets used by the Indian Railways, consider the following statements: (2015)

1. The decomposition of human waste in the biotoilets is initiated by a fungal inoculum.
2. Ammonia and water vapour are the only end products in this decomposition which are released into the atmosphere.

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)

State Food Safety Index 2022- 2023

For Prelims: [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India](#), [State Food Safety Index](#)

For Mains: Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, Food and nutrition insecurity - a consequence of structural inequities

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

The [State Food Safety Index \(SFSI\) 2022- 2023](#) released by the [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) sheds light on the performance of Indian states in ensuring food safety.

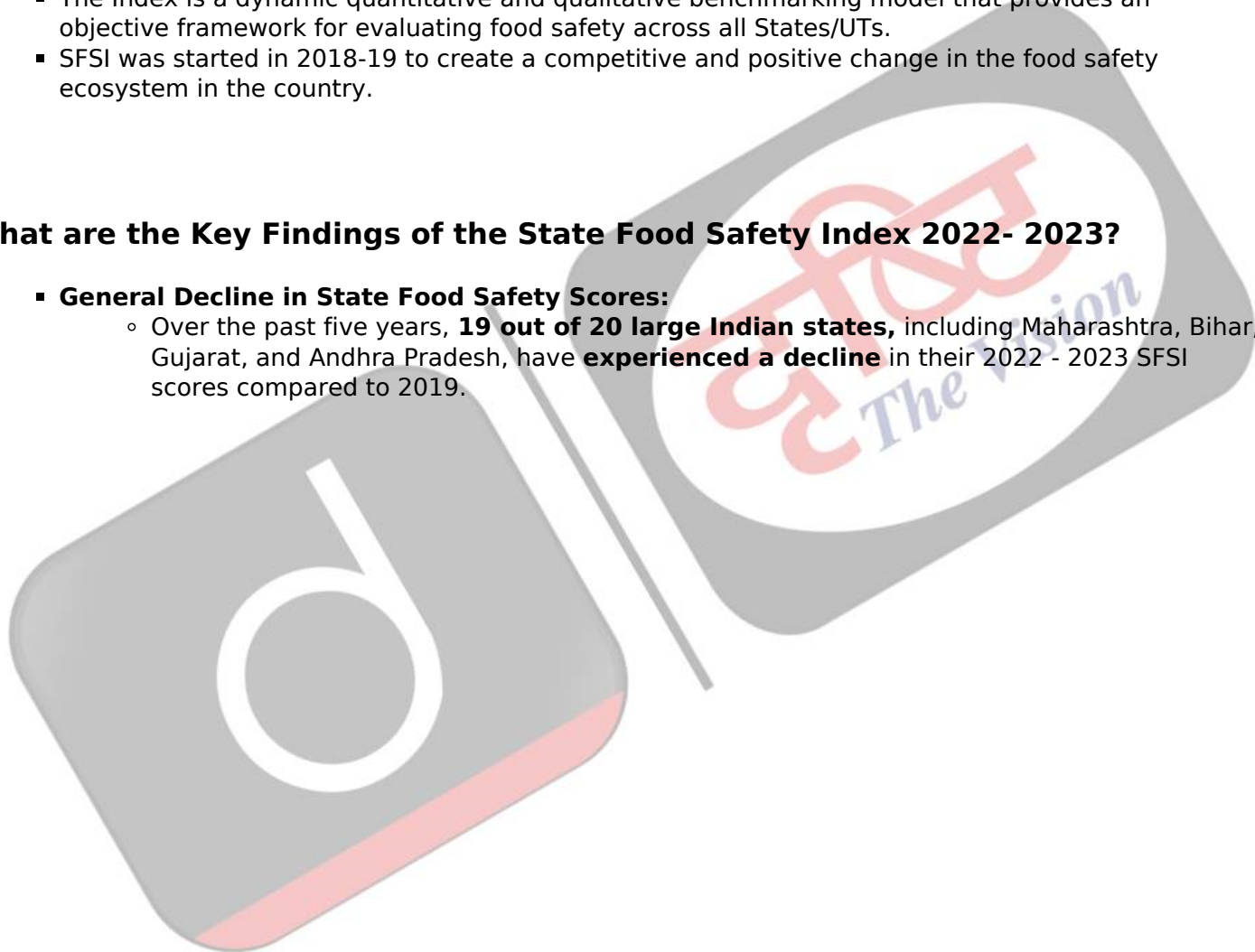
- The 2022- 2023 index introduced a new parameter, '**Improvement in SFSI Rank**', which assessed a state's progress from the previous year. To accommodate this change, weights of other parameters were adjusted.

What is the State Food Safety Index (SFSI)?

- It is an annual evaluation that measures the performance of states and union territories on food safety.
- The Index is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model that provides an objective framework for evaluating food safety across all States/UTs.
- SFSI was started in 2018-19 to create a competitive and positive change in the food safety ecosystem in the country.

What are the Key Findings of the State Food Safety Index 2022- 2023?

- **General Decline in State Food Safety Scores:**
 - Over the past five years, **19 out of 20 large Indian states**, including Maharashtra, Bihar, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, have **experienced a decline** in their 2022 - 2023 SFSI scores compared to 2019.



STATES WITH STEEPEST INDEX FALL

| State | 2019 | 2023 |
|----------------|------|------|
| Maharashtra | 74 | 45 |
| Bihar | 46 | 20.5 |
| Gujarat | 73 | 48.5 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 47 | 24 |
| Chhattisgarh | 46 | 27 |

Source: SFSI reports; all scores out of 100

SAFETY MEASURE

| Parameter | Weight |
|---|------------|
| Compliance | 28 |
| Consumer Empowerment | 19 |
| Human Resources and Institutional Data | 18 |
| Food Testing Infrastructure | 17 |
| Improvement in SFSI Rank (<i>added in 2023</i>) | 10 |
| Training and Capacity Building | 8 |
| TOTAL | 100 |

Impact of the 2023 Index Parameter Adjustment:

- After adjusting for a new parameter introduced in the 2022- 2023 index, 15 out of 20 states recorded lower SFSI scores in 2022 - 2023 compared to 2019.

States' Overall Rankings in their Respective Categories:

| Category- Union Territories | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Name | Rank |
| Jammu & Kashmir | 1 |
| Delhi | 2 |
| Chandigarh | 3 |
| Category- Small States | |
| Small State | Rank |
| Goa | 1 |
| Manipur | 2 |
| Sikkim | 3 |
| Category- Large States | |
| Large State | Rank |
| Kerala | 1 |
| Punjab | 2 |
| Tamil Nadu | 3 |

Decline in 'Food Testing Infrastructure':

- The 'Food Testing Infrastructure' parameter measures the availability of adequate testing

infrastructure with trained personnel in each state for testing food samples.

- This parameter **experienced the steepest fall**, with the average score for all large states dropping from 13 out of 20 in 2019 to 7 out of 17 in 2022 - 2023.

- **Gujarat and Kerala were the best performers** in this parameter in 2022 - 2023 while **Andhra Pradesh performed the worst**.

▪ **Compliance Scores Decreased:**

- This parameter measures licensing and registration of food businesses, inspections conducted, special drives and camps organized, and other such compliance-related tasks carried out by each state's food safety authority.
- Scores for the 'Compliance' parameter also declined.
 - **Punjab and Himachal Pradesh received the highest scores** in this parameter and Jharkhand received the lowest score.
- The 2022 - 2023 average compliance score for all large states **stood at 11 out of 28 compared to 16 out of 30 in 2019**.

▪ **Varied Consumer Empowerment:**

- The 'Consumer Empowerment' parameter, measures a state's performance in various consumer empowering initiatives of FSSAI including participation in [Food Fortification](#), **Eat Right Campus, BHOG (Blissful Hygienic Offering to God), Hygiene Rating of Restaurants, and Clean Street Food Hubs**.
 - **Tamil Nadu emerged as the top performer** followed by Kerala and Madhya Pradesh.
- Overall, the average score in 2022 - 2023 being **8 points out of 19** compared to 2019 when it was 7.6 points out of 20.

▪ **Decline in Human Resources and Institutional Data Scores:**

- The 'Human Resources and Institutional Data' parameter measures the availability of human resources including number of Food Safety Officers, Designated Officers, and facility of adjudications and appellate tribunals in each state.
 - The average score for this parameter dropped to 7 points out of 18 in 2022- 2023 from 11 points out of 20 in 2019.
 - Even top performers in 2019 like Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh received lower scores, in 2022 - 2023.

▪ **Improvement in 'Training and Capacity Building':**

- The average score increased from 3.5 out of 10 in 2019 to 5 out of 8 in 2022- 2023.

▪ **Improvement in SFSI Rank:**

- In the new parameter 'Improvement in SFSI Rank,' only **Punjab showed significant improvement**.
- Improvement in the SFSI Rank parameter, which carried a weightage of 10% in 2022 - 2023, 14 out of 20 large states received 0 points.

Annual Survey of India's City-Systems 2023

For Prelims: Annual Survey of India's City-Systems 2023, [Local Governments](#), [Panchayati Raj Institution \(PRI\)](#), 74th Amendment Act.

For Mains: Annual Survey of India's City-Systems 2023, Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

The **Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS) 2023**, published by the Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, a non-profit institution, highlights the challenges and constraints faced by the **Local Governments** in Indian Cities.

What are the Key Highlights of the ASICS Report?

- **Eastern States have better Urban Legislations:**
 - Eastern states, comprising Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal, have **relatively better urban legislations** followed by southern states.
- **Lack of Transparency:**
 - Urban legislations are not available in the public domain in accessible formats. Only 49% of states/UTs have put out municipal legislations on websites of respective state urban departments.
- **Lack an Active Master Plan:**
 - At least 39% of India's capital cities lack an active master plan.
- **Local Governments' Limited Control over Finances:**
 - A majority of **Local Governments** in Indian cities are financially dependent on their respective state governments, limiting their financial autonomy.
 - Local governments in Indian cities **have limited control over key financial matters**, including taxation, borrowing, and budget approval, with the need for state government approval in most cases.
 - Only Assam empowers **its city governments to collect all key taxes**. Except five States — **Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Meghalaya, and Rajasthan** — all the others have to get **approval from the State** before borrowing money.
- **Asymmetry in City Categories.:**
 - There are disparities in the level of influence and control over finances across different city categories, including megacities (>4 million (mn) population), large cities (1-4 mn), medium cities (0.5 mn-1 mn), small cities (<0.5 mn).
 - Mayors in megacities are not **directly elected and do not have a five-year tenure**, whereas mayors in smaller cities are directly elected but have limited authority over city finances.

Table 1 | The table shows asymmetry of mayor/council powers across various city categories

| Percentage of cities... | Mega | Large | Medium | Small | Total |
|---|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| with a five-year mayoral tenure | 38% | 68% | 67% | 84% | 83% |
| with a directly elected Mayor | 0% | 39% | 33% | 36% | 36% |
| that can approve the city budget | 75% | 34% | 40% | 11% | 12% |
| that can borrow without the prior sanction of the State | 13% | 16% | 12% | 15% | 15% |
| that can invest without the prior sanction of the State | 75% | 63% | 40% | 42% | 42% |
| that have complete power over their staff | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| that can levy all key taxes | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% | 2% |
| Average no. of functions devolved by law (number) | 11 | 8 | 13 | 11 | 9 |
| Total population (in mn) | 57.84 | 57.88 | 28.93 | 173.9 | 318.5 |

Mega cities (>4 million population), large cities (1-4 million), medium cities (5,00,000-1 million), small cities (<5,00,000)

▪ **Limited Power Over Staff Appointments:**

- Mayors and city councils have limited authority in appointing and promoting staff, including senior management teams, leading to challenges in accountability and efficient administration.

▪ **Financial Transparency Challenges:**

- Indian cities face challenges in financial transparency, with a lack of quarterly financial audited statements and limited dissemination of annual audited financial statements. This issue is more pronounced in larger cities.
- Only 28% of the cities disseminate their annual audited financial statements. The number goes down further to **17% if only the mega cities are considered.**
- While bigger cities do publish their city budgets, **smaller cities lag there with just 40%-65% of them publishing** that information.

▪ **Staff Shortages:**

- **35% of posts in India's municipal corporations are vacant.** The vacancy progressively worsens with 41% posts being vacant among municipalities and 58% being vacant in town panchayats.

▪ **Comparison with Global Metropolises:**

- A comparison with global metropolises such as New York, London, and Johannesburg shows significant differences in the number of city staff per one lakh population and the administrative powers granted to these cities.
- There are 5,906 city workers in New York and 2,936 in London for every one lakh population compared to **just 317 in Bengaluru, 586 in Hyderabad,** and 938 in Mumbai. Cities such as New York have also been **empowered to impose taxes, approve their own budget,** invest and borrow without approval.

What is Local Government?

- **About:**
 - Local Self Government is the **management of local affairs by such local bodies** who have been elected by the local people.
 - The local self-Government includes **both rural and urban government.**
 - It is the third level of the government.
 - There are 2 types of local government in operation - **panchayatats in rural areas and Municipalities in urban areas.**
- **Rural Local Governments:**
 - **Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI)** is a system of rural local self-government in India.
 - PRI was constitutionalized through the **73rd Constitutional Amendment** Act, 1992 to build democracy at the grass roots level and was entrusted with the task of rural development in the country.
- **Urban Local Governments:**
 - **Urban Local Governments** were established with the purpose of democratic decentralization.
 - There are **eight types of urban local governments in India** - Municipal Corporation, Municipality, Notified Area Committee, Town Area Committee, Cantonment Board, township, port trust, special purpose agency.
 - The 74th Amendment Act pertaining to urban local government was passed during the regime of P.V. Narsimha Rao's government in 1992. It came into force on 1st June, 1993.
 - Added Part IX -A and consists of provisions from articles 243-P to 243-ZG.
 - Added 12th Schedule to the Constitution. It contains 18 functional items of Municipalities and deals with Article 243 W.

What can be done to Enhance Local Governance in Indian Cities?

- **Strengthen Fiscal Autonomy:**
 - Empower local governments to collect a broader range of taxes, enabling them to **generate revenue independently.** Reduce the need for state government approval for borrowing, especially for well-managed municipalities.
- **Decentralization of Administrative Powers:**
 - Devolve administrative powers to local governments to make key staff appointments and promotions, particularly for municipal commissioners and senior management teams. This will **enable cities to build strong, accountable organizations.**
- **Transparency and Civic Engagement:**
 - Enforce the Public Disclosure Law uniformly across all states and union territories to ensure the regular publication of civic information, including internal audit reports, annual reports, minutes of meetings, and decision-making processes. Establish online platforms for easy citizen access to such information.
- **Benchmarking and Learning from Global Metropolises:**
 - Establish a mechanism for benchmarking Indian cities against global metropolises, **identifying best practices in urban governance,** staffing levels, and financial management. Encourage the adoption of successful strategies from global peers.
- **Citizen Participation and Feedback:**
 - Promote citizen engagement through public consultations, feedback mechanisms, and participatory budgeting. Create platforms for citizens to voice their concerns and suggestions, ensuring a more responsive government.
- **Use of Technology:**
 - Embrace digital governance tools and platforms to streamline administrative processes, improve transparency, and provide **online services to citizens.** Implement e-governance initiatives to reduce bureaucratic hurdles.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Local self-government can be best explained as an exercise in (2017)

- (a) Federalism
- (b) Democratic decentralisation
- (c) Administrative delegation

(d) Direct democracy

Ans: (b)

Impact of Export Restriction of Rice

For Prelims: Impact of Export Restriction of Rice, [Monsoon](#), [Kharif](#) and Rabi Crops, [Food Security](#), Basmati and Non-basmati rice.

For Mains: Impact of Export Restriction of Rice, Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

In July 2023, India banned the export of non-basmati white rice amid depleting public stock in the Central pool, elevated cereal prices, and the looming threat of the uneven [Monsoon](#), which **has impacted prices globally and domestically**.

Why did India Pose Restrictions on the Export of Rice?

- **Domestic Food Security:**
 - Restricting rice exports helps maintain **sufficient stocks in the country, especially in the Central pool**, to meet the [Food Security](#) needs of India's large population.
 - According to the first advance estimates for the production of major [Kharif Crops](#) in the 2023-24 season by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Rice production is estimated to be **3.7% lower than the previous year**.
- **Rising Domestic Prices:**
 - The government imposed export restrictions to control the surge in domestic rice prices. When there is a shortage of rice in the domestic market, prices tend to rise, and **restrictions can help stabilize prices** and protect consumers from inflation.
- **Uncertainty Related to Monsoons:**
 - India heavily relies on the [monsoon](#) season for agricultural production. Unpredictable or uneven monsoons can affect crop yields.
 - Export restrictions were presumed **as a precautionary measure** to conserve rice stocks in case of a poor monsoon season.

What is the Impact of Export Restriction of Non-Basmati Rice?

- **Global Rice Price Fluctuations:**
 - India's rice restrictions have made an impact on supply, availability and prices in domestic as **well as global markets over the months**.
 - After India imposed the ban on the export of non-basmati white rice, there was an **immediate and substantial increase in global rice prices**.
 - While prices have **slightly moderated in the following months**, they still remain elevated compared to the pre-ban period.
- **Domestic Price Escalation:**

- Despite the export ban, domestic rice prices in India have continued to surge.
- The average wholesale price of rice per quintal, as of October 2023, was significantly higher compared to previous periods, marking a 27.43% increase over the past month.
- Retail prices have increased compared to 2022, with the **average price of rice per kilogram being 12.59%** higher in October 2023 than a year ago and 11.72% higher than when export regulations were implemented by the government.
- **Overall Economic Impact:**
 - The restrictions on rice exports have had far-reaching economic consequences, affecting both domestic and international markets.
 - These consequences include price fluctuations, disruptions in global trade, and implications for **food security in importing countries.**

What are the Key Facts About Rice?

- Rice is a **staple food for most** of the population in India.
- It is a **kharif crop** which requires high temperature (above 25°C) and high humidity with annual rainfall above 100 cm.
 - In the areas of less rainfall, it is grown with the help of irrigation.
- In southern states and West Bengal, the climatic conditions allow the cultivation of two or three crops of rice in an agricultural year.
 - In West Bengal farmers grow three crops of **rice called 'aus', 'aman' and 'boro'.**
- About one-fourth of the total cropped area in India is under rice cultivation.
 - **Leading Producer States:** West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab.
 - **High Yielding States:** Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Kerala.
- India is **the second-largest producer of rice after China.**

How Does India Export Rice?

- India is the biggest exporter of rice in the world. As per the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), India accounted for about 40% of the total rice exports (56 million tonnes) in the world during 2022.
- India's rice exports are broadly categorised into **Basmati and Non-basmati rice.**
 - **Basmati Rice:** In 2022-23, India exported 45.61 lakh metric tonnes of basmati rice.
 - Top destinations for Indian basmati rice included **Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, and Yemen.**
 - **Non-Basmati Rice:** In the 2022-23 fiscal year, India exported 177.91 lakh metric tonnes of non-basmati rice.
 - The non-basmati rice includes varieties like Sona Masuri and Jeera rice.
- **Top Destination of Non-basmati White Rice:** Benin, Madagascar, Kenya, Cote D' Ivoire, Mozambique, Vietnam.
 - The non-basmati rice category includes **6 sub-categories**— rice in husk of seed quality; other rice in husk; husked (brown) rice; rice parboiled; non-basmati white rice; and broken rice.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q 1. Among the following, which one is the largest exporter of rice in the world in the last five years? (2019)

- (a) China
- (b) India
- (c) Myanmar
- (d) Vietnam

Ans: (b)

Q 2. According to India's National Policy on Biofuels, which of the following can be used as raw materials for the production of biofuels? (2020)

1. Cassava
2. Damaged wheat grains
3. Groundnut seeds
4. Horse gram
5. Rotten potatoes
6. Sugar beet

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1, 2, 5 and 6 only

(b) 1, 3, 4 and 6 only

(c) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only

(d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The National Policy on Biofuels, 2018, allows production of ethanol from damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, etc., which are unfit for human consumption.
- The Policy also allows conversion of surplus quantities of food grains to ethanol, based on the approval of the National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of sugarcane juice, sugar containing materials like sugar beet, sweet sorghum, starch containing materials like corn, cassava, damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, rotten potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production. Hence, 1, 2, 5 and 6 are correct. Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

76th Session of WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia

Investment in **Primary Health Care (PHC)** as the most inclusive, equitable and cost-effective way to achieve **Universal Health Coverage** was emphasized during the **Ministerial Roundtable Conference at the 76th session of WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia** in New Delhi.

- **Delhi Declaration** on strengthening primary health care as a key element towards achieving universal health coverage was signed at the meeting.
- Reaffirming the vision of the Government of India of "**Antyodaya**" (the principle of leaving no one behind), it was stated that India's strong health system relies on a "**whole of government**" and "**whole of society**" approach with the goal of improving essential health services and health systems to pre-pandemic levels.
- Importance of **Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs)** was emphasized which are transforming the delivery of comprehensive primary health care services.

Read More: [Accredited Social Health Activist \(ASHA\)](#), [Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission \(ABDM\)](#)

Saima Wazed Elected as WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia

Saima Wazed (from Bangladesh) was elected as the **Regional Director of the [World Health Organization's South-East Asia region](#)** during the **76th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Southeast Asia**.

- The Regional Committee for **South-East Asia** is WHO's governing body in the Region.
- **The WHO Southeast Asia Region has 11 Member States** - Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. WHO has country offices in all 11 Member States.
 - The WHO South-East Asia Regional Office is **headquartered in New Delhi, India**.

Chinese Antarctic Fleet Sets Off to Build New Research Station

Two Chinese icebreaker research vessels and a cargo ship have set sail for [Antarctica](#).

- The mission's primary objective is to complete the **construction of China's fifth research station in the Antarctic**, situated on Inexpressible Island near the **Ross Sea**.
 - The Ross Sea is located off the coast of Antarctica. It is one of the last **intact marine ecosystems** in the world.
 - **China has four research stations in Antarctica:** Great Wall(1985), Zhongshan(1989), Kunlun(2009), and Taishan(2014).
- An icebreaker is a ship specially designed to navigate through ice-covered waters, and also provide a safe waterway for other vessels.
- **India has two active research stations in Antarctica, 'Maitri' and 'Bharati.'**

Read more: [India's Antarctic Missions](#), [PACER Scheme](#)

Culmination of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

The **Indian Prime Minister** marked the culmination of [Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav](#) with the conclusion of the '**Meri Maati Mera Desh**' campaign.

- Commencing on the **12th of March 2021**, the inception of the **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** drew **inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi's [Dandi Yatra](#)**.
 - Notably, the conclusion of this celebratory event was observed on the **31st of October 2023, coinciding with the birth anniversary of [Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel](#)**.
- During the same occasion, the **foundation stone for the Amrit Vatika and Amrit Mahotsav Memorial** was also ceremoniously laid.
- The "**Meri Maati Mera Desh**" campaign pays homage to the courageous individuals who made significant sacrifices for the nation.
 - Through collaborative efforts at various levels, the campaign involves diverse activities such as **erecting memorials, taking pledges, planting indigenous saplings**, and honoring freedom fighters and their families through ceremonies.

Read more: [Dandi March 1930](#), [Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel](#)

Rohini Nayyar Prize

Engineer-turned-social worker **Deenanath Rajput** was awarded the **Rohini Nayyar Prize** for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Development for his work in changing the lives of over 6,000 tribal women in **Naxalite affected areas of Chhattisgarh** through the establishment of a [farmers' producers organization \(FPO\)](#).

- This is the **second edition of the Rohini Nayyar Prize**, which was instituted in the memory of the eponymous economist and administrator Rohini Nayyar who passed away in **2021**.
- **Rohini Nayyar Prize awardee is granted a cash prize of ₹10 lakhs.**

Read More: [Gandhi Peace Prize](#), [Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize](#)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/03-11-2023/print>

