

## Mains Master

### Rescuing grace from disgrace

#### Context:

- The addresses by the President of India and Governors during Parliament and Legislative Assembly sessions are described as "customary," "ceremonial," and "ritualistic," reflecting a long-standing tradition in the country's political culture.

#### Background:

- The tradition of elaborate addresses is deeply rooted in India's culture of customs, ceremonies, and rituals, underscoring the significance attached to formalities in political proceedings.
- Presidents and Governors, despite not actively contributing to the content of the speeches, play a formal role in reading them out, adding a ceremonial touch to these events.

#### Present Crisis:

- Tension arises between the writer (usually the government) and the reader (President or Governor) of the speeches, leading to challenges in the execution of this ceremonial duty.
- Controversies over Governors' addresses in Legislative Assemblies are on the rise, resulting in exchanges of accusations and counter-accusations, indicating a breakdown in the smooth execution of this ceremonial aspect.

#### Way Forward:

- President Venkataraman's suggestion of presenting a brief outline for legislative business emerges as a potential solution to save time and avoid the tedium associated with lengthy addresses.
- The proposed rearrangement aims to ensure that the address belongs to the collective body of Legislators rather than being attributed solely to the drafter (government) or reader (President or Governor).
- Political polarization between the Centre and State governments underscores the need for reform, making President Venkataraman's suggestion particularly relevant in the evolving political landscape.
- The Motion of Thanks, which typically follows the address, can be utilized for showcasing governmental accomplishments and plans, providing an appropriate platform for detailed discussions.
- The reform necessitates an innovative and self-denying Chief Minister to take the initiative and lead the change, emphasizing the importance of rescuing the tradition from potential disgrace and aligning it with contemporary political dynamics.

### Protesting farmers want MSP law: How would such a guarantee work?

- Introduction:**
  - Delhi Police enforces Section 144 due to the upcoming march of over 200 farmers' unions from Punjab to Delhi.
  - The central demand of the 'Dilli Chalo' march is the establishment of a legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- Farmers in a Buyer's Market:**
  - Farmers find themselves in a challenging buyer's market where bulk harvests result in sudden supply increases.
  - This situation leaves farmers as price takers, lacking the ability to influence prices.
- Price versus Income Support:**
  - Economists express opposition to fixed MSPs, advocating for income support schemes instead.
  - Direct income support schemes, such as PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi and Rythu Bandhu, are considered less market-distorting and more inclusive.
- Real Producing Farmers' Dilemma:**
  - Concerns arise over income support schemes treating all farmers equally, potentially neglecting those who invest more resources and effort.
  - Farmers whose primary livelihood is agriculture might have justifiable reasons for seeking price assurance.

#### Guaranteeing MSP:

- Conventional methods for enforcing MSP involve compelling buyers to pay or having government agencies buy the entire marketable produce.
- An alternative approach is Price Deficiency Payments (PDP), compensating farmers for the difference between the market price and MSP.
- State Initiatives:**
  - Madhya Pradesh's Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana and Haryana's Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana are examples of attempts to implement PDP.
  - Challenges faced by these initiatives include a lack of central support and variations in payment mechanisms.
- Haryana's Approach:**
  - Haryana's Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana (BBY) incorporates both physical procurement and PDP, depending on the gap between MSP and market price.
  - The PDP mechanism includes fixed rates with caps and considerations for the average yield, aiming to support farmers effectively.
- Feasibility and Road Ahead:**
  - Madhya Pradesh and Haryana serve as examples demonstrating the feasibility of delivering MSP beyond traditional crops.
  - The success of these states can be attributed to APMC mandi infrastructure and transaction recording systems.
  - A nationwide PDP scheme with central funding could incentivize other states to adopt similar approaches.
- Conclusion:**
  - The farmers' demand for a legal guarantee of MSP reflects the complexities of balancing market dynamics, income support, and the unique challenges faced by real producing farmers.
  - State initiatives provide insights into potential solutions, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to agricultural policy.

### MSP issue: what govt committee set up in 2022 has done so far

#### Context:

- Farmers' demand for MSP guarantee:** Farmers across India, particularly those associated with the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political), are protesting for a legal guarantee on Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for all crops. This demand stems from their concerns about low and volatile market prices for their produce, which they believe leave them vulnerable to exploitation and financial hardship. They argue that a legal guarantee for MSP would provide them with a safety net and ensure fair compensation for their efforts.
- Repeal of farm laws:** In November 2021, the Indian government repealed three controversial farm laws that had been met with widespread protests by farmers for over a year. These laws, aimed at liberalizing the agricultural sector, were seen by many farmers as detrimental to their livelihoods and potentially handing over control to large corporations. While the repeal was a significant victory for the farmers' movement, it did not address their core demand for a legal guarantee on MSP.
- Government committee on MSP:** In response to the ongoing farmers' agitation, the government formed a committee in July 2022 to deliberate on ways to make MSP more "effective and transparent." This committee, headed by former agriculture secretary Sanjay Agrawal, includes representatives from various stakeholders but notably excludes members of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), the umbrella body of farmers' unions that led the 2020-21 protests. The committee's mandate focuses on promoting "zero budget" farming, changing crop patterns, and improving the effectiveness and transparency of MSP, but does not explicitly mention a legal guarantee.



## Background:

- **Year-long farmers' protest:** The demand for a legal guarantee on MSP is not new. Farmers have been protesting for this for years, culminating in the large-scale agitation against the farm laws that began in 2020. This protest, led by the SKM, lasted for over a year before the government agreed to repeal the laws. However, the issue of MSP remained unresolved.
- **Government's promise:** During the negotiations to end the farmers' protest, the government promised to set up a committee to address farmers' concerns, including MSP. This committee was eventually formed in July 2022.
- **Committee's work:** The committee has been meeting regularly since its formation and has held six main meetings along with numerous sub-group meetings and workshops. However, its recommendations and progress remain unclear.

## Key Issues:

- **Disagreement on committee's mandate:** The main point of contention is the committee's mandate, which does not explicitly include a legal guarantee for MSP. Farmers argue that this is a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed, while the government maintains that the committee's broader scope allows for exploring various options to improve MSP effectiveness.
- **Uncertainty over committee's recommendations:** The committee's recommendations are yet to be made public, leaving farmers and other stakeholders in the dark about the government's potential solutions. There is speculation that the committee may propose alternative measures to improve MSP without a legal guarantee, but these remain unconfirmed.
- **Government's position on legal guarantee:** The government's stance on a legal guarantee for MSP is unclear. While they have acknowledged the farmers' demand, they haven't explicitly committed to implementing it. Concerns exist about the potential economic and logistical challenges of such a guarantee, as well as its impact on the wider agricultural market.

## Overall Outlook:

- **Continued farmers' unrest:** The ongoing protest by farmers highlights their continued dissatisfaction with the government's response to their demands. If the committee's recommendations do not address the issue of a legal guarantee for MSP, further protests and agitation are likely.
- **Crucial government decision:** The government's response to the farmers' demand and the committee's recommendations will be a critical test of its commitment to addressing agricultural distress and reforming the agricultural sector. A decision to implement a legal guarantee for MSP would have significant economic and political implications, requiring careful consideration and potential adjustments to the existing agricultural system.
- **Uncertain future of farm reforms:** The outcome of this situation will likely shape the future of farm reforms in India. If the government prioritizes farmers' demands and implements a legal guarantee for MSP, it could be seen as a major concession and a shift in policy direction. However, if the government opts for alternative solutions or resists the demand, it could further strain relations with farmers and raise questions about the effectiveness of existing reforms.

## A 360 degree view on MSP

### Minimum Support Price (MSP):

- **Definition and Purpose:** MSP is a government-declared price at which it guarantees to purchase certain agricultural commodities from farmers. It aims to provide a safety net for farmers by ensuring a minimum income for their produce, safeguarding them from volatile market fluctuations and exploitation by middlemen.
- **Arguments for MSP:**
  - **Food security:** MSP incentivizes farmers to grow essential food crops, ensuring sufficient domestic production for national food security.

- **Livelihood security:** Guaranteed income through MSP provides farmers with a stable income source and reduces poverty in rural areas.
- **Market stability:** MSP prevents drastic price crashes during glut seasons, protecting farmers from market manipulation.
- **Investment and productivity:** Stable income fosters investment in better seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation, potentially enhancing agricultural productivity.
- **Arguments against MSP:**

- **Market distortion:** Fixed MSPs can create artificial price floors, leading to overproduction, inefficient resource allocation, and potential storage burdens for the government.
- **Fiscal burden:** Implementing MSP for all crops across the country can put immense pressure on government finances, especially with increasing production.
- **Inequity:** Critics argue that MSP primarily benefits large, surplus-producing farmers, neglecting small and marginal farmers in less fertile regions.
- **Sustainability:** MSP for water-intensive crops like paddy can incentivize unsustainable farming practices, depleting water resources.

### Public Support for Agriculture:

- **Beyond MSP:** Public support for agriculture extends beyond just MSP and includes various policies and programs aimed at improving the lives and livelihoods of farmers. This can involve:
  - **Subsidies:** Input subsidies on seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation can reduce production costs and improve farmer profitability.
  - **Loans and credit:** Access to affordable loans and credit can help farmers invest in technology, infrastructure, and expansion.
  - **Infrastructure development:** Investments in rural infrastructure like roads, storage facilities, and irrigation systems can improve market access and reduce post-harvest losses.
  - **Extension services:** Providing farmers with access to agricultural extension services, training, and market information can empower them to make informed decisions and improve their farming practices.
  - **Crop insurance:** Crop insurance schemes can provide financial protection to farmers against crop failures due to natural calamities.
- **Challenges and Reforms:**
  - **Targeting:** Ensuring that public support reaches the most deserving farmers, particularly small and marginal farmers, requires effective targeting mechanisms.
  - **Efficiency:** Streamlining public support programs and reducing leakages are crucial to maximize their impact and cost-effectiveness.
  - **Sustainability:** Promoting sustainable farming practices through incentives and education is essential for long-term agricultural development.
  - **Market integration:** Facilitating better market access and information for farmers can improve their bargaining power and reduce dependence on government support.








### Finding a Balance:

The debate on MSP and public support for agriculture highlights the need for a balanced approach that addresses the concerns of both farmers and the broader economy. This requires:











- **Comprehensive reform:** Reforming the current MSP system to address its limitations while ensuring a safety net for farmers.
  - **Diversified support:** Expanding public support beyond just MSP to include other forms of assistance like subsidies, infrastructure, and extension services.
  - **Targeted interventions:** Ensuring that public support reaches the most vulnerable farmers and promotes sustainable practices.
  - **Market-oriented solutions:** Facilitating efficient market mechanisms and empowering farmers through better market access and information.
  - **Open dialogue and consensus:** Engaging in open dialogue with all stakeholders, including farmers, farmer organizations, policymakers, and experts, to build consensus on sustainable solutions for Indian agriculture.
- By addressing these aspects, India can move towards a more efficient and equitable system of public support for agriculture, ensuring the well-being of farmers, food security for the nation, and sustainable agricultural development.

# Prelims Booster





## Scientists seek more protections for 'living fossil'

-  The American horseshoe crab is under threat from commercial harvests for bait and biomedical use, as well as from habitat loss and climate change.
-  Populations of horseshoe crabs have crashed in recent decades, with spawning numbers down two-thirds from 1990 in the Delaware Bay estuary.
-  Pharmaceutical companies reap horseshoe crabs in large numbers for their blue-colored blood, which contains a clotting agent used to test drugs and medical devices for bacterial endotoxins.
-  The creatures also face growing habitat loss from oceanfront development, dredging, pollution, coastal erosion, and sea-level rise linked to global warming.
-  The petition seeks endangered species protection for the American horseshoe crab and designation of "critical habitat" to be protected, especially during spawning season.
-  Regulations allow the biomedical industry to extract only a portion of a horseshoe crab's blood, though 10-15% of harvested animals die during this process.
-  Mass die-offs have been observed in the past three years, with the horseshoe crab's overall vulnerability to climate change ranked as "very high" by NOAA in 2023.








## PM inaugurates Abu Dhabi's first Hindu stone temple

-  Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Abu Dhabi's first Hindu stone temple, built by the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), as a symbol of shared heritage and global unity.
-  Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first Hindu stone temple in Abu Dhabi, emphasizing its cultural and symbolic significance.
-  Mr. Modi thanked the President of UAE, Sheikh Mohammad Zayed Al Nahyan, for making the grand temple a reality and expressed hope for it to become a symbol of communal harmony and global unity.
-  Prime Minister Modi expressed gratitude to the President of the UAE for his role in making the temple a reality and envisioned it as a unifying symbol for people worldwide.
-  The temple inauguration was attended by UAE Tolerance Minister Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan and spiritual leaders from all faiths, emphasizing the significance of the event.
-  The event was attended by UAE Tolerance Minister Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan and spiritual leaders from various faiths, highlighting the importance of the temple's inauguration.
-  The BAPS temple is built on a 27-acre site in Abu Mreikhah, near Al Rahba off the Dubai-Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed Highway, at a cost of around ₹700 crore.
-  The temple is constructed on a 27-acre site in Abu Mreikhah, near Al Rahba, and was built at a cost of approximately ₹700 crore.
-  Mr. Modi highlighted that the temple adds a cultural chapter to the UAE's identity, known for its modern landmarks like Burj Khalifa and Sheikh Zayed Mosque.
-  Prime Minister Modi emphasized that the temple contributes to the cultural identity of the UAE, which is renowned for its modern architectural landmarks.

## Is EC trying to help Pak get GI tag for basmati?

-  The European Commission (EC) is working with Pakistan to help the country obtain the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for its basmati rice, while India's basmati GI application has been put on hold since July 2018.
-  The EC made public its database eAmbrosia, showing that Pakistan has applied for the GI tag for its basmati rice, raising questions about the timing of Pakistan's status update and the active communication between Pakistan authorities and the EC.
-  The EC's actions have raised concerns about the potential diplomatic crisis that could arise, as India is expected to oppose Pakistan's application due to historical reputation and territorial disputes, particularly regarding Jammu and Kashmir.
-  The GI tag for basmati rice is considered a test case and a "moment of truth" for the India-EU trade deal, with the EC's actions prompting India to defend its rights and reputation in the global basmati trade.

## High in sky, a new-gen eye

-  The Bengaluru-based National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) successfully flew a prototype of a new-generation unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that can fly at great heights, about 20 km from the ground, runs entirely on solar power, and can remain in the air for months on end.
-  Such UAVs belong to a class of flying objects called HAPS, or high-altitude pseudo-satellite vehicles, or HALE, that is high-altitude long-endurance vehicles.
-  The primary utility of HAPS vehicles is in the field of surveillance and monitoring, with potential applications in disaster management and other situations.
-  HAPS technology is still under development, with several countries and companies having developed and flown such vehicles with encouraging success, but none has mastered the technology yet.
-  The world record for a vehicle of this class is held by the Airbus-manufactured Zephyr, which flew continuously for 64 days in August 2022 before crashing.
-  The full-scale machine that NAL is aiming to build by 2027 would be designed to remain in the air for 90 days at a stretch, aiming to overcome the limitations of traditional UAVs and satellites.
-  HAPS are designed to loiter over a region at a height of about 20 km above the ground, providing continuous monitoring and high-resolution observation over large areas, addressing the limitations of traditional UAVs and satellites.

## 'Specific duration' clause in draft India-EFTA pact may affect drug industry

-  India-EFTA Free Trade Agreement: A clause in the draft agreement may delay access to affordable, generic drugs in India by at least six years. This could potentially impact the availability of essential medicines in the country.
-  Clause Details: The agreement specifies a minimum six-year period during which pharmaceutical companies cannot rely on "undisclosed test data" for market approval. This may hinder the timely availability of generic versions of patented drugs.
-  Applicability to Biologics Drugs: The clause may apply to biologics drugs, including monoclonal antibodies and vaccine formulations. This could affect the production and availability of complex organic and inorganic mixtures used in these drugs.
-  Indian Pharmaceutical Industry: India has a thriving generics drug industry, producing over 60,000 generic drugs and resisting attempts to extend monopoly rights over patented drugs. The industry has an annual turnover of ₹3.4 lakh crore and is the third-largest globally.
-  Concerns Raised: Experts warn that the clause could impede access to essential drugs like bedaquiline for TB, potentially restricting availability. Organizations like Medicine Sans Frontiers have expressed concerns and written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the potential impact.
-  Current Status of Negotiations: Recent negotiations between EFTA and India show progress, with intellectual property rights concerns remaining a major point of discussion. The negotiations aim to increase investment by EFTA countries in India and reduce tariffs on various exports.
-  Global Perspective on Patented Drugs: Patented drugs often result in unaffordable essential drugs worldwide, and the conflict between original inventors and Indian drug manufacturers involves the concept of 'data exclusivity.' This has implications for drug availability and affordability on a global scale.

Data exclusivity refers to the period during which the data submitted by a company to gain regulatory approval for a product is protected from being used by other companies. This protection typically applies to clinical trial data submitted to regulatory agencies like the FDA for drugs and medical devices.