



National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

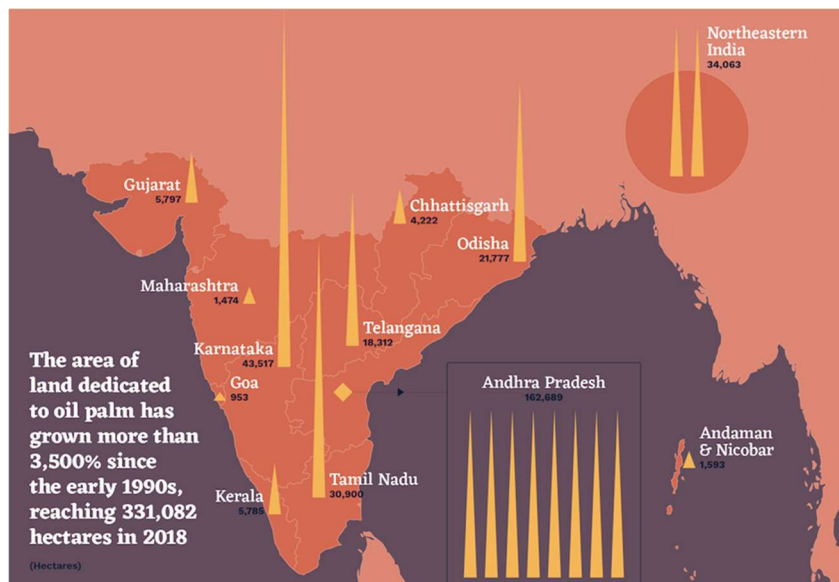
Context: There is a decline seen in Palm Oil imports this year as compared to last year.

What is NMEO-OP?

- NMEO-OP is a newly introduced Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed at promoting palm oil cultivation in India.
- The scheme aims to expand the area under oil palm cultivation to 6.5 lakh hectares by 2025-26 and further increase it to 10 lakh hectares by 2029-30.
- Oil palm farmers participating in the scheme will receive financial assistance and remuneration based on a price and viability formula.
- The Viability Formula, similar to the Minimum Support Price mechanism, will initially fix the remuneration at 14.3% of the Crude Palm Oil (CPO) price.
- The remuneration percentage is expected to gradually increase to 15.3%.
- One of the key objectives of the scheme is to provide substantial support for inputs and interventions in oil palm cultivation.
- The scheme also emphasizes rejuvenating old gardens by providing special assistance for replantation.

Palm Oil and its Uses

- Palm oil is a widely used edible vegetable oil extracted from the reddish pulp (mesocarp) of oil palm fruits.
- Its versatile applications include cooking oil, cosmetics, processed foods, confectionery, spreads, soaps, shampoos, cleaning products, and biofuel.
- The utilization of crude palm oil for biodiesel production is often referred to as "green diesel."
- Indonesia and Malaysia are the leading producers of palm oil, accounting for approximately 90% of global production. In 2021, Indonesia produced over 45 million tonnes, making it the largest producer.
- The palm oil industry has faced criticism due to concerns about unsustainable production practices that contribute to deforestation and allegations of exploitative labour practices inherited from the colonial era. Despite the controversies, palm oil remains popular due to its affordability and high oil yield per hectare compared to other vegetable oil crops like soybean.



The National Food Security Mission: Oilseeds (NFSM-Oilseeds)

- The National Food Security Mission: Oilseeds (NFSM-Oilseeds) is a program aimed at increasing oilseed production in India.
- The mission focuses on various interventions, including the production and distribution of foundation and certified seeds.
- Certified seeds and seed mini kits of high-yielding varieties are distributed to farmers, facilitating the cultivation of improved oilseed crops.
- To enhance the availability of quality seeds, 36 oilseed seed hubs were established between 2018-19 and 2019-20.

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- Oilseed mini kits containing high-yielding varieties are allocated for distribution in major oilseed-growing states.
- The government has used the Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime to provide price signals and incentives for farmers to diversify their crops toward oilseed production.

Central OBC list to be updated

Context: Around 80 additional castes in six states are likely to be added to the Central List of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the coming months.

- Approximately 80 castes from six states are likely to be added to the Central List of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the coming months.
- The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) is currently processing the approval for most of these castes.
- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment reported the addition of 16 communities to the Central OBC list in states like Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir.
- The states of Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana have requested the inclusion of specific communities in the Central OBC list.
- The NCBC will examine the requests and send recommendations to the Cabinet for approval.
- Currently, there are over 2,650 different communities listed in the Central OBC list, including the recent additions.

Who are OBCs?

Other Backward Classes are the social groups that are **considered to be socially and educationally disadvantaged**, but they are **not considered to be as disadvantaged as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**. The Indian government provides reservations to Other Backward Classes in government jobs, higher education, and legislature to a certain extent, to ensure equal representation and to provide opportunities for social and economic upliftment.

What's the Triple Test formula?

- A five-judge Constitution Bench in the *K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India (2010)* judgment said that barriers to political participation are not the same as barriers to education and employment.
- While deciding on the legality of OBC reservations in Maharashtra local body elections in March 2021, the Supreme Court set out a three-layered test – also called triple test.
- This is something that State governments have to follow to provide reservations-
 - Step 1: States must set up a dedicated commission to examine backwardness in local bodies.
 - Step 2: they must determine the size of the quota for communities on the basis of data collected by the commission.
 - Step 3: These reservations, combined with the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes quotas, cannot exceed 50% of the total seats in the local body.

National Commission for Backward Castes

Background:

- Two Backward Class Commissions were appointed:
 - Kaka Kalelkar Commission (1950s)
 - Also known as the First Backward Classes Commission.
 - B.P. Mandal Commission (1970s).
- Indra Sawhney case (1992):
 - Supreme Court directed the government to create a permanent body for the inclusion and exclusion of Backward Classes.

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- National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC):
 - Created under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act (1993) in response to the Supreme Court's directive.
- 123rd Constitution Amendment bill (2017):
 - Introduced in Parliament to enhance the protection of backward classes' interests.
- Repeal of the National Commission for Backward Classes Act:
 - Parliament passed a separate bill to repeal the 1993 Act, making it irrelevant.
- Constitutional status for NCBC:
 - The bill granting constitutional status to NCBC received the President's assent in August 2018 under 338B

Structure of NCBC:

- The Commission consists of five members including a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three other Members appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
- The conditions of service and tenure of office of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and other Members is determined by President.

Functions of NCBC

- The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) investigates and monitors safeguards for socially and educationally backward classes.
- It advises on the socio-economic development of backward classes and evaluates their progress.
- The Commission presents annual reports on the working of these safeguards to the President.
- The reports are laid before both Houses of Parliament, and copies are forwarded to concerned State Governments.
- NCBC has additional functions related to the protection, welfare, and advancement of backward classes as specified by the President.
- The Commission possesses the powers of a civil court when trying a suit.

Guidelines to Ensure Fire Safety

Context: The recent fire in a Mukherjee Nagar coaching institute has brought to light the flouting of Fire Safety Guidelines in the Building Code

- According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 330 people have died in commercial building fires in 2019.
- When we include fire accidents in residential or dwelling buildings, the fatality rate gets very high at 6,329.

Provisions to ensure Fire Safety

- The National Building Code of India includes fire and life safety provisions that are considered mandatory.
 - One, it provides specifications and guidelines for design and materials that reduce the threat of destructive fires. For example,
 - It specifies fire resistance materials to be used in exterior walls, interior bearing walls, floor, roof, fire check doors, fire enclosure exits, etc.,
 - Two, The Code, classifies all the existing and new buildings by nature of use. For example; residential, educational, institutional, assembly (like cinemas and auditorial), Industrial, etc.,
 - It recommends the location of buildings by type of use in specific zones. This is to ensure that industrial and hazardous structures do not coexist with residential, institutional, office, and business buildings.
 - Three, the code prescribes incorporation of the technologies into buildings to alert in case of a fire and also to fight. Examples are, automatic fire detection and alarm system, automatic sprinklers and water sprays, fireman's lift, fire barriers, etc.,
 - Four, It provides exemptions for various buildings in case of practical difficulty. A local head, fire services may consider exemptions from the Code.
 - Despite, the existence of fire safety rules in every state, the provisions of the Code are ignored in practice.
- The National Disaster Management Authority has set mandatory requirements for fire safety in public buildings.
- The Health Ministry mandates third-party accreditation for fire safety in hospitals and requires a fire response plan.

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National Building Code

The National Building Code of India was initially published in 1970 and underwent its first revision in 1983. Subsequently, three significant amendments were made to the 1983 version, with two in 1987 and one in 1997. The second revision of the Code took place in 2005, followed by two amendments in 2015.

- National Building Code of India covers the detailed guidelines for construction, maintenance and fire safety of the structures.
- National Building Code of India is published by Bureau of Indian Standards and it is recommendatory document.
- Guidelines were issued to the States to incorporate the recommendations of National Building Code into their local building bylaws making the recommendations of National Building Code of India as mandatory requirement.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

SCO Day



Context: Recently, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) celebrated SCO Day under India's chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Delhi.

What is the SCO?

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization founded in 2001. It comprises eight member states: China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Its objective?

Its primary objectives include combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism, fostering trade and economic cooperation, and facilitating cultural exchanges among member states.

The major areas of cooperation within the SCO:

The major areas of cooperation within the SCO encompass various fields, including:

- Security Cooperation
- Economic Cooperation
- Cultural Cooperation and
- Legal Cooperation

Regional Security and Stability by the SCO:

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) plays a significant role in promoting regional security and stability through various mechanisms and initiatives, such as:

- Counterterrorism Cooperation
- Joint Anti-Drug Operations
- Border Security Cooperation
- Intelligence Sharing and Information Exchange
- Regional Stability Dialogue
- Cooperative Security Measures

Golden Jackal



Context: Recently, Wildlife SOS and the Maharashtra Forest Department collaborated to rescue a Golden jackal from a deep well in Waghale village, located in the Junnar Range of Pune.

What is Wildlife SOS?

- Wildlife SOS is a non-profit organization dedicated to wildlife conservation and animal welfare in India.
- The acronym "SOS" stands for "Save Our Souls," reflecting the organization's mission to rescue and rehabilitate animals in distress.
- Wildlife SOS was founded in 1995 by a group of individuals with a shared passion for protecting wildlife and promoting a harmonious coexistence between humans and animals.

Physical Features Golden jackal:

Features of the Golden jackal include long, pointed ears, long hair, a fluffy and long tail and fur coloration that varies from yellow to pale gold with a brown tip. They are opportunistic omnivores in nature, consuming both plants and meat. They are territorial animals that hunt in groups, known as packs.

Scientific Name: Its scientific name is *Canis aureus*.

Distribution:

- They have a wide distribution, ranging from North and East Africa to southeastern Europe and South Asia, including Burma.
- Golden jackals are abundant in valleys, along rivers, tributaries, canals, lakes and seashores, but are rare in foothills and low mountains.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ They are widespread across India, from the Himalayan foothills to the Western Ghats. <p>Conservation Status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Golden jackal is classified as "Least Concern" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). ➤ It is protected under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
<p>Crystal that melts under UV light</p> 	<p>Context: Recently, the researchers at Osaka University have made an innovative discovery of a material that transitions from a crystal to a liquid.</p> <p>Unique Property of the Discovered Material? The unique property of the discovered material is its ability to transition from a crystal to a liquid when exposed to UV light. This phenomenon, known as photo-induced crystal-to-liquid transition (PCLT), is induced by light alone.</p> <p>Impact on the Design of Future Materials: The discovery of this material opens up possibilities for the design of future materials with various applications. Understanding the mechanisms behind crystal melting and the ability to induce such transitions using light alone can be utilized in the development of photo-responsive materials.</p> <p>Applications: These materials could have applications in areas such as sensors, optical devices, data storage, drug delivery systems and smart materials.</p>
<p>Open Market Sale Scheme</p> 	<p>Context: Recently, the central government ceases sale of rice and wheat to the state governments under OMSS.</p> <p>What is the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)? OMSS is a scheme through which the Food Corporation of India (FCI) sells surplus stocks of wheat and rice in the open market.</p> <p>Objective: The objective of OMSS is to enhance the supply of food grains, particularly wheat, during the lean season and stabilize open market prices, especially in deficit regions.</p> <p>E-Auctions on NCDEX:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The scheme is conducted through e-auctions on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX) platform. OMSS consists of three schemes: ➤ Sale of wheat to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction ➤ Sale of wheat to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction by dedicated movement and ➤ Sale of Raw Rice Grade 'A' to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction. <p>The Food Corporation of India:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Food Corporation of India (FCI) is a statutory body established in 1965 under the Food Corporation Act, 1964. ➤ It operates under the administrative control of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India. ➤ The FCI is responsible for ensuring food security in the country by maintaining an adequate supply of food grains and distributing them through various welfare schemes. ➤ The headquarters of the Food Corporation of India is located in New Delhi, India.
<p>Kalamata Port</p> 	<p>Context: Recently, a fishing boat carrying migrants sank off the Greek coast, resulting in the death of at least 78 people. Around 106 individuals have been rescued, with 14 taken to a hospital in Kalamata.</p> <p>Geographical Location: Kalamata Port is situated approximately 250 kilometers southwest of Athens, the capital city of Greece. The two cities are located in different regions, with Athens being in the Attica region and Kalamata in the Peloponnese region.</p> <p>Significance: Kalamata Port is an important seaport in Greece, serving as a vital transportation hub and contributing to the country's economy. It facilitates maritime trade, fishing activities, and tourism, connecting the region to other domestic and international ports.</p> <p>Administration: The administration and management of Kalamata Port fall under the responsibility of the Hellenic Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, specifically the Hellenic Port Authority (OLTH).</p>

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