

GS PAPER3-DISASTER MANAGEMENT**Why is Assam Prone to Flooding**

The article discusses how Assam, despite repeated floods and significant damage, has failed to effectively manage its flood situation. It highlights the geographical challenges, outdated flood control methods, and lack of modern infrastructure to predict and mitigate flooding. The text criticizes both state and central governments for inadequate response and planning.

What is the Current Situation in Assam Regarding Floods?

1. This year, floods in Assam have led to more than 50 fatalities.
2. Around 360,000 people have been displaced due to the rising waters.
3. The flooding has impacted over 40,000 hectares of agricultural land, causing significant crop damage.
4. Major areas of Dibrugarh and Guwahati, key cities in Assam, are submerged under floodwater.

Why is Assam Prone to Flooding?

1. Assam has over 120 rivers, many originating from extreme rainfall areas in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, China, and Bhutan.
2. The Brahmaputra River, one of the largest in the world, flows through Assam, contributing significantly to flooding.
3. The state's geography includes bowl-shaped lowlands like Guwahati, which are prone to waterlogging.
4. Historical flood control structures, built in the 1960s and 1970s, are outdated and not effective in current conditions.
5. Embankments and other flood control measures have not been adequately maintained or updated.
6. The lack of modern weather stations and flood warning systems hampers effective disaster management.
7. Continuous construction projects have damaged natural water channels and marshes, worsening flood risks.

What should be done?

1. Implement the proposed flood mitigation projects announced by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, which aim to secure the region from floods.
2. Modernize the flood warning systems by installing advanced weather stations and sirens, as suggested by a parliamentary panel in 2021.
3. Integrate indigenous knowledge to construct flood-resistant housing and infrastructure.
4. Conduct regular dredging of rivers to manage sediment and improve flow.
5. Arrest soil erosion along riverbanks to stabilize landscapes and reduce sediment load in rivers.
6. Enhance collaboration between state and central governments to ensure resources and efforts are adequately directed toward sustainable flood management solutions.

GS PAPER2-INDIAN CONSTITUTION — FEATURES, AMENDMENTS, SIGNIFICANT PROVISIONS.**Madras High Court decision on the angapradakshinam practice**

The article discusses a recent court decision in India that allows a controversial religious practice. It examines how the judiciary determines which religious practices are essential and protected under the law, often leading to inconsistent rulings that limit religious freedom based on constitutional principles.

What are the judgments of the Madras High Court on the angapradakshinam practice?

1. **2024 Ruling by Justice G.R. Swaminathan:** The Madras High Court allowed the angapradakshinam practice where individuals roll over banana leaves after meals have been consumed. This was seen as part of the devotees' freedom of religion under Article 25 and the right to privacy under Article 21.
2. **Overtaken 2015 Decision:** The 2024 decision reversed a 2015 ruling that banned the practice citing potential caste discrimination. The 2015 judgment had concerns that it predominantly involved Dalits and non-Brahmins, which was seen as discriminatory.
3. **Inclusion of All Castes:** Justice Swaminathan noted that not only Dalits but people from other castes also participated, which countered the allegation of caste-based discrimination.

What is the criticism of this case?

1. **Lack of Essentiality Test:** Critics argue that the court did not rigorously examine whether angapradakshinam is an essential religious practice, diverging from past cases where such scrutiny was pivotal.
2. **Potential Health Concerns:** The practice involves rolling over used banana leaves, raising questions about hygiene and health risks, which the court seemingly overlooked.
3. **Inconsistency in Judicial Reasoning:** The decision highlights inconsistencies in how Indian courts determine what constitutes an essential practice, often shifting between strict textual analysis and broader interpretations based on rationality, leading to unpredictable legal standards.

How have courts treated essential practices in the past?

1. **Sri Shirur Mutt (1954):** The Supreme Court stated that essential religious practices should be determined by religion itself. This set a precedent for examining religious texts to define essential practices.

2. **The Durgah Committee, Ajmer (1961):** The court differentiated between essential religious practices and superstitious beliefs, stating that only integral and essential practices are protected under freedom of religion.
3. **Gramsabha of Village Battis Shirala (2014):** The court ruled capturing and worshipping a live cobra during Nag Panchami as not essential because it wasn't supported by broader religious texts.
4. **Mohammed Fasi (1985):** The Kerala High Court ruled that growing a beard was not essential to Islam as it was not mandated in the Quran, despite it being a practice based on Hadith.
5. **Acharya Jagdishwarananda Avadhuta (2004):** The Supreme Court denied that the tandava dance was an essential practice of the Ananda Margi faith because the faith existed before the practice was adopted.
6. **M. Ismail Faruqui (1995):** The court held that while prayer is essential, praying at a specific mosque is not unless the mosque itself holds particular religious significance.

Way forward

To ensure fairness, courts should avoid interpreting religious texts and focus on constitutional values. They should treat practices that align with fundamental rights and public health as essential. This approach will harmonize religious freedom with societal progress, as seen in the evolving jurisprudence from Sri Shirur Mutt (1954) to more recent rulings like M. Ismail Faruqui (1995).

GS PAPER3-ECONOMY

India's Balance of Payments (BoP)

The article discusses India's Balance of Payments, which records financial transactions with other countries. It notes a recent surplus in the current account for the first time in 11 quarters but explains that a current account deficit isn't necessarily bad for a developing economy like India.

What is the Balance of Payments?

1. The Balance of Payments (BoP) is a comprehensive record of a country's financial transactions with the outside world. It details the money that flows into and out of the country, categorized as either positive (inflows) or negative (outflows).
2. The BoP includes two main accounts: the Current Account and the Capital Account.
3. **Current Account:** It includes the trade of goods (which was in deficit due to higher imports than exports) and the trade of services and other invisibles (which recorded a surplus). These invisibles include services like IT, banking, insurance, and remittances from Indians abroad, which helped offset the deficit from the goods trade.
4. **Capital Account:** This account captures investment-related transactions such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Institutional Investments (FII), reflecting a strong inflow of foreign investments.

How Do Foreign Exchange Reserves Fit In?

1. Foreign exchange reserves play a crucial role in India's Balance of Payments (BoP).
2. When there is a surplus in the BoP, indicating more dollars coming into the country than going out, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) intervenes.
3. The RBI absorbs these excess dollars to increase its foreign exchange reserves.
4. This action helps stabilize the rupee's value. If the RBI did not boost the reserves, the rupee would appreciate, making Indian exports more expensive and less competitive internationally.
5. Maintaining these reserves is essential for managing the exchange rate and supporting overall economic stability.

Why Shouldn't We Always Aim for a Surplus?

1. Aiming for a current account surplus is not always beneficial for an economy, especially for developing ones like India.
2. A surplus might indicate underutilized economic capacity, as seen during the COVID-19 lockdowns in FY 2020-21, which halted much economic activity, leading to an undesirable surplus.
3. Typically, a current account deficit of 1.5%-2% of GDP is considered healthy for India. It suggests robust domestic demand and necessary imports of capital goods to expand production capabilities.
4. Such a deficit supports long-term economic growth by facilitating investments in productive assets, which are crucial for boosting export capabilities in the future.

GS PAPER3- ECONOMY

Challenges and Opportunities in Indian Economy

The article discusses India's economic condition and policy strategies in response to global challenges like inflation and geostrategic tensions. It highlights India's growth, financial health, and policy measures such as taxation and support for startups, MSMEs, and the service sector to sustain growth and stability.

What is the Global Economic Situation?

1. Globally, inflation is sticky, contrary to early predictions of it being transitory. This affects demand and jobs.
 2. High interest rates and rising protectionism worsen the situation. Funds for startups are scarce, with investments flowing to US treasuries.
 3. Geostrategic uncertainties are present in Europe, West Asia, and the South China Sea.
- 2

How is India's Economy Performing?

1. **Growth Rate:** India has achieved four consecutive years of growth exceeding 7%, positioning itself as a bright spot in the global economy.
2. **Inflation Management:** The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) proactive measures have reduced core inflation to the lower end of the target band, though food inflation remains a concern.
3. **Global Contribution:** India contributes almost 18% to global growth, showcasing its significant impact on the worldwide economy.

What are the Challenges and Opportunities in Indian Economy?

1. **Challenges:**
 2. Sticky **global inflation** affecting demand and jobs.
 3. **High personal income tax rate** at 37%, potentially reducing disposable income.
 4. **High debt-to-GDP ratios:** over 80% for the general government and 57% for the central government, limiting developmental spending.
 5. **Household savings have dropped** to a low of 5.1% of GDP, which could slow growth.
6. **Opportunities:**
 7. A **robust startup ecosystem** is emerging in the Bengaluru-Chennai belt.
 8. The **MSME sector is growing**, driving innovation and pulling in large industries.
 9. **Digital transactions** are increasing, indicating a shift towards a more modern economy.

What are the Financial Reforms Required?

1. **Sell public sector undertakings:** Address short-term revenue shortfalls by selling shares of profitable public sector enterprises to manage the fiscal deficit effectively.
2. **Develop the corporate bond market:** Enhance private sector access to long-term debt and deepen the market to avoid distortions in bank balance sheets.
3. **Encourage foreign participation in bonds:** Fully open government and highly-rated corporate bonds for foreign investment, supporting rupee-denominated transactions.
4. **Support MSMEs:** Enhance the support for MSMEs, particularly through schemes like credit guarantees which have shown low default rates and proven effectiveness.
5. **Maintain regulatory and fiscal stability:** Ensure reduced regulatory burden and a stable fiscal regime to support the evolution of GIFT IFSC and maintain financial stability.

GS-PAPER 3-AGRICULTURE

National policy on Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) proposed

The draft National Policy on Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) has been put for public comment by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

Who are Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)?

Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) are voluntary collective entities formed by farmers to enhance their bargaining power and access to inputs, markets, and technology. They enable small and marginal farmers to pool resources, share risks, and collectively undertake farming and marketing activities. Currently, 5000 FPOs have been registered on the Open Network for Digital Commerce portal for selling the produce online.

The key objectives of the proposed policy include:

1. **Promoting Formation:** To consolidate existing FPOs and establish 50,000 new FPOs, benefiting 2.50 crore farmers.
2. **Assessment:** Assessment of all schemes, including the 2021 Central sector scheme 'Formation and promotion of 10,000 FPOs'.
3. **Capacity Building:** Emulation of the AMUL model with a 3-tier structure emphasizing collective business goals, capacity building, and professional management.
4. **Market Linkages:** End-to-end value chain approach to boost farmers' income from production to marketing.
5. **Financial Support:** Offering financial assistance and incentives to FPOs to strengthen their operational capabilities and sustainability.
6. **Policy Framework:** Developing a supportive policy framework at national, state, and local levels to create an enabling environment for the growth and success of FPOs.
7. **Technology Adoption:** Promoting the adoption of modern agricultural technologies and practices through FPOs to enhance productivity and efficiency.

The potential of FPOs to transform Indian agriculture.

1. **Reducing the cost and increasing the income** – FPOs can help farmers reduce costs through bulk purchases of inputs, marketing of their farm products, Aggregation of produce, and bulk transport.
2. **Modernization of agriculture** – 86% of Indian farmers are small and marginal farmers who don't have enough money to access modern equipment. Since FPOs collectively use modern farm equipment, they will promote the modernization of agriculture.

3. **Collective farming** – Present Average land holding size is 1.08 hectares in 2015-16, FPOs can engage farmers in collective farming and address productivity issues emanating from small farm sizes.
4. **Compete with large enterprises** – It has the potential of enhancing the farmers’ bargaining power and income levels so they can compete with large corporate enterprises.
5. **Access to technology** – Access to modern technologies, credit, facilitation of capacity building, extension and training on production technologies, and ensuring traceability of agricultural produce.
6. **Easy access to credit** – Easy access to funds and other support services by the government/donors/service providers.
7. **Eliminating intermediaries** – In agricultural marketing, the presence of a large number of intermediaries who work non-transparently leads to lower incomes for farmers. FPOs are going to eliminate these intermediaries.
8. **Value addition** – Post-harvest losses will be minimized through value addition and efficient management of value chain facilities provided by FPOs.
9. **Collective strength** – FPOs help in the collectivization of such small, marginal, and landless farmers to give them the collective strength to deal with issues like crop failure, and access to the market.
10. **Price fluctuation** can be managed; if there are practices like contract farming, agreements, etc.
11. **Easy in communication for dissemination of information** about price, volume, and other farming-related advisories.

Issues facing FPOs.

1. Lack of/ Inadequate Professional Management – Trained manpower is presently not available in the rural space to manage and supervise FPO business professionally.
2. Weak Financials – FPOs are mostly represented by Small and marginal farmers with poor resource bases hence, initially they are not financially strong enough to deliver vibrant products and services.
3. Lack of Risk Mitigation Mechanism – Presently, while the risks related to production at the farmers’ level are partly covered under the existing crop/livestock / other insurance schemes, there is no provision to cover the business risks of FPOs.
4. Inadequate Access to Market – Lack of linkage with Industry/ other market players, and large retailers by the FPOs.
5. Inadequate Access to Infrastructure – Like transport facilities, storage, value addition (cleaning, grading, sorting, etc.) and processing, brand building, and marketing.
6. Lack of technical Skills/ Awareness – Inadequate awareness among the farmers about the potential benefits of collectivization & non-availability of competent agencies for providing handholding support.

Government steps to address these issues.

1. Equity Grant Fund Scheme for Enhancing viability, sustainability of FPOs and Increasing credit worthiness of FPCs.
2. Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme to provide collateral-free credit to FPOs.
3. Scheme for the Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages to bridge the gaps in the supply chain in terms of the availability of raw materials and linkages with the market.
4. Operation Greens (TOP to TOTAL) will promote FPOs, agri-logistics, processing facilities, and professional management.
5. 100% tax deduction for FPOs with an annual turnover of up to Rs. 100 crores.

Success Stories of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs):

1. Oriental FPO: Developed cold chain infrastructure and launched a branded product called ‘Safe N Fresh’ in Jammu and Kashmir UTs.
2. Prayag Raj Farmer Producer Company Limited: Established input retail outlets benefiting farmers and consumers in Uttar Pradesh.
3. Rameshwar Farmer Producer Company Limited: Established wholesale counters for vegetable sales, providing more remunerative channels for farmers in Uttar Pradesh.
4. Rampur FPO: Collaborated with the district administration for the “Aahaar Se Upchar Tak” campaign, supplying nutrition-rich products to Anganwadi Kendra and improving nutritive outcomes in Uttar Pradesh.

Conclusion:

FPOs have the potential to change the face of Indian agriculture by empowering farmers, increasing productivity, reducing costs, and improving access to markets, infrastructure, and technology. The government and other stakeholders must work together to further.

PRELIM FACT**1.Stablecoins**

Recent volatility in the stablecoin market, such as the collapse of TerraUSD, has drawn attention to the challenges facing these digital assets.

What are Stablecoins?

Stablecoins are digital cryptocurrencies designed to maintain a stable value by pegging their worth to assets like fiat currencies (e.g., USD, EUR), commodities (e.g., gold), or other cryptocurrencies. They aim to minimize price volatility, making them suitable for transactions and as a store of value within the volatile cryptocurrency market.

Stablecoins come in several types:

1. Fiat-collateralized: Backed 1:1 by fiat currencies like USD or EUR (e.g., Tether, Gemini Dollar).
2. Asset-backed: Supported by a basket of assets like commodities or precious metals, which can affect their value (e.g., Digix Gold).
3. Crypto-collateralized: Decentralized and backed by cryptocurrencies, often over-collateralized to mitigate price volatility (e.g., Dai).
4. Non-collateralized: Decentralized and algorithmically governed, without specific backing (e.g., Basis).

Concerns:

Concerns include risks related to short-term debt, asset stability, contagion risks, financial stability, lack of transparency, and regulatory challenges. Cooperation between the stablecoin industry and regulators is crucial for effective regulation without stifling innovation.

2. Money Mule

Banks are intensifying scrutiny on new sole proprietorship and individual current accounts to combat 'money mule' activities, aiming to deter money laundering and digital frauds.

What is a Money Mule?

A money mule is a person who allows their bank account to be used by criminals to transfer illegally obtained money. Banks have observed a rise in mule accounts, particularly among new accounts less than a year old, prompting cautious approvals and transaction limits.

Modus Operandi:

Criminals recruit money mules to launder money from online scams, frauds, and crimes like human trafficking and drug trafficking. They use mules to create distance between victims and themselves, making it harder for law enforcement to trace the funds. Methods include bank transfers, checks, virtual currency, prepaid cards, and more. Mules are often recruited through fake job ads or social media promising easy money. Some know they're aiding crime; others may not realize. They're compensated or deceived into believing they're helping a friend. When caught, they face legal consequences for facilitating money laundering, even if unknowingly.

What measures are being taken by banks?

Measures include verification visits, latitude data checks, and washout logic analysis. The Reserve Bank of India is addressing these concerns with banks amid ongoing discussions on enhancing safeguards against financial fraud.

3. Global Conclave on Plastic Recycling and Sustainability (GCPRS)

The Global Conclave on Plastic Recycling and Sustainability (GCPRS) began yesterday at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, addressing issues of plastic waste management, recycling, and sustainability to promote circularity.

About GCPRS:

The Global Conclave on Plastics Recycling and Sustainability (GCPRS), organized by the AIPMA (All-India Plastics Manufacturers' Association (AIPMA)), gathers industry stakeholders to address critical issues in plastic use and recycling, showcasing innovative technologies and fostering collaboration for sustainable practices across sectors.

Initiatives Taken to Tackle Plastic Pollution:

Global Initiatives:

1. Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML)
2. GloLitter Partnerships Project
3. London Convention, 1972

India-Specific Initiatives:

1. Elimination of single-use plastic
2. Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016
3. Un-Plastic Collective
4. Kerala: Beat Plastic Pollution Initiative
5. Other initiatives for plastic pollution mitigation: Project REPLAN (REducing PLastic from Nature), Promotion of Circular Economy, EPR Portal for Plastic Packaging, Swachh Bharat Mission, Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE) Movement

4. NAMO (New Agriculture Market Order) Drone Didi Scheme

Recently, the Union Minister of Commerce & Industry during his address at the International Innovation Conclave organised by the PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PHDCCI) said that the government is ready to promote the drone industry that has seen rapid growth in the last three years.

The drone ecosystem and deploying them in villages across the nation aligns with the PM's NAMO Drone Didi initiative that will help empower the women in the agriculture sector.

What is Namu Drone Didi's initiative?

- Under the initiative, rural women are trained to become drone pilots for agricultural purposes.
- The initiative aims to enhance economic empowerment and financial autonomy among women, especially in rural areas.
- The initiative aims to equip 15,000 women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with agricultural drones to assist in tasks such as crop monitoring, spraying fertilisers and sowing seeds.
- This will also provide additional income opportunities for many women

Benefits of drones in the agriculture sector

Here are some of the key benefits of using drones in agriculture:

- **Improved efficiency:** Drones can cover large areas of land **quickly and efficiently**, allowing farmers to **gather data and monitor crops** more effectively.
 - This can help to **identify issues early**, leading to faster and more effective interventions.
- **Enhanced crop yields:** Drones can be used to **gather data on crop health**, allowing farmers to identify areas **that require attention**.
 - By addressing these issues, farmers can **improve their crop yields** and increase their profits.
- **Reduced costs:** Drones can help to **reduce costs by identifying areas of the farm that require attention**, reducing the need for manual labour and reducing the use of pesticides and other chemicals.
- **Improved accuracy:** Drones can capture **high-resolution images and data**, providing farmers with a **detailed view of their crops**.
 - This can help to identify areas that require attention and ensure that interventions are targeted and effective.

Challenges of adopting drone technology in the agriculture sector

Here are some of the key challenges:

- **Fear of job loss:** Many farmers are concerned that the **adoption of drone technology** will lead to job loss, as **fewer workers will be needed** to perform manual labour on the farm.
- **Lack of knowledge and training:** Farmers may not have the **knowledge or training** necessary to operate drones effectively.
 - This can make it difficult for them to **adopt this technology**, as they may not be confident in their ability to use it.
- **Cost:** Drones can be **expensive**, and many farmers **may not have the financial resources** to invest in this technology.
- **Regulatory barriers:** There may be **regulatory barriers to the use of drones in agriculture**, which could make it difficult for farmers to adopt this technology.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. "India has the potential to become a global leader in horticulture production and export". Critically analyze this statement, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian horticulture sector.

The horticultural sector in India, which includes six categories—pomology (fruits), olericulture (vegetables), floriculture (flowers), plantation crops, spices, aromatics, and herbal medicines—is a vital component of the nation's agriculture. India stands as the second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables globally and is also the second-largest producer and exporter of spices. This robust foundation implies that India has the potential to become a global leader in horticulture production and export.

India's Potential to Become a Global Leader in Horticulture Production and Export:

Strengths:

- **High-Value Crops and Higher Returns:** Horticulture offers significantly **higher returns per unit of land** compared to cereal crops. This **economic advantage** not only boosts **domestic productivity and profitability** but also enhances India's **competitiveness in the global market**, making Indian horticultural products **attractive for export** due to their higher value.
For example: Indian Alphonso mangoes command **premium prices** internationally, significantly boosting **farmers' incomes** and making India a **key mango exporter**.
- **Nutritional Security:** The diverse range of horticultural products addresses vitamin and micronutrient deficiencies, improving the **health and well-being** of the population. This emphasis on **nutritional security** can also position India as a **supplier of health-promoting foods**, meeting the growing **international demand for nutritious and healthful produce**.

For instance: India exports **nutritious fruits and vegetables** like **pomegranates and moringa leaves**, meeting global demand for health-promoting foods.

- **Employment Generation:** As a **labour-intensive** sector, horticulture generates significant **employment opportunities**, supporting **rural livelihoods** and reducing unemployment. This **labour availability** ensures that India can **sustain and expand** its horticultural production to meet **global demand**, thus enhancing its **export capacity**.

For example: The **floriculture** industry in **Karnataka and Tamil Nadu** is supported by an extensive **rural labour force** that cultivates and processes **flowers** for export.

- **Boost to Secondary Agriculture:** The development of **cottage-based industries** through secondary agriculture **adds value** to horticultural produce. These industries, which include **processing, pharmaceuticals, perfumery, cosmetics, chemicals, confectionery, oils, and paints**, create **high-quality, exportable** products. This **value addition** enhances the **global competitiveness** of Indian horticultural exports.

For example: **Spice** processing in **Kerala and Andhra Pradesh** adds value to **raw spices**, producing **high-demand products** like **curry powders and essential oils** for export.

- **Source of Variability and Industrial Raw Material:** Horticulture provides variability in farm produce and diets, catering to **diverse consumer needs** both domestically and internationally. Additionally, as a **source of raw materials** for various industries, Indian horticultural products can meet the demand of **global markets for processed goods, pharmaceuticals, and other industrial applications**.

For example: India exports **neem and turmeric** for their **medicinal properties**, supporting **global pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries**. and showcasing its role in providing diverse raw materials.

Weaknesses of the Indian Horticulture Sector:

- **Longer Sowing to Harvest Cycle:** Many horticultural crops have long cycles from sowing to harvest, **delaying returns on investment and deterring farmers**.

For example: **Apple orchards** in **Himachal Pradesh** require several years to yield fruit, posing **financial challenges** for farmers.

- **High Cost of Inputs:** High costs of fertilisers, pesticides, and planting materials **strain farmers financially**, especially smallholders.

For example: **Grape farmers** in **Maharashtra** face high input costs, impacting their **profitability**.

- **Old and Senile Orchards:** Old and unproductive orchards **reduce overall productivity and yield quality**. **For example:** In **Jammu and Kashmir**, aged **apple orchards** result in **lower productivity**, affecting **market competitiveness**.

- **Post-Harvest Management Facilities:** Inadequate **cold storage and processing facilities** lead to significant post-harvest **losses**.

For example: **Potato farmers** in **Uttar Pradesh** suffer **substantial wastage** due to insufficient cold storage infrastructure.

- **Lack of Trained Extension Services and Market Intelligence:** Insufficient extension services and market intelligence hinder farmers' **access to best practices and market information**.

For example: **Rubber farmers** in **Kerala** lack **timely market information**, affecting their ability to **optimise profits** and respond to market demands.

Way Forward:

- **Shortening Crop Cycles:** Invest in **research and development** to breed **faster-maturing varieties** of long-cycle crops like **apples and guavas**.

- **Subsidising Inputs:** Provide subsidies and **financial support** for essential inputs such as **fertilisers and pesticides**.

- **Rejuvenating Old Orchards:** Implement programs to replace old and senile orchards with **new, high-yield varieties**.

- **Enhancing Post-Harvest Infrastructure:** Develop better cold storage, processing, and transportation facilities.

- **Strengthening Extension Services and Market Intelligence:** Train more **extension workers** and provide farmers with **better access** to market data.

While India has significant strengths positioning it to become a global leader in horticulture production and export, there are also notable weaknesses that need to be addressed. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The future depends on what we do in the present." By implementing targeted interventions to overcome these weaknesses, India can realize its potential and secure its place as a global horticultural powerhouse.

MCQS

- Consider the following statements about PM's NAMO Drone Didi initiative :
 - Under the initiative, rural women are trained to become drone pilots for educational purposes.
 - The initiative aims to equip 15,000 women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with agricultural drones to assist in tasks such as crop monitoring, spraying fertilisers and sowing seeds.
 Which of the above statements are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only**
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Consider the following statements about The Global Conclave on Plastics Recycling and Sustainability (GCPRS):
 - The Global Conclave on Plastics Recycling and Sustainability (GCPRS) is organized by the AIPMA (All-India Plastics Manufacturers' Association (AIPMA)).
 - It gathers industry stakeholders to address critical issues in plastic use and recycling, showcasing innovative technologies and fostering collaboration for sustainable practices across sectors.
 Which of the above statements are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Consider the following statements about Money Mule:
 - A money mule is a person who allows their bank account to be used by criminals to transfer illegally obtained money.
 - Banks have observed a rise in mule accounts, particularly among new accounts less than 3 years old.
 Which of the above statements are correct?
 - 1 only**
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Consider the following statements:

Statement-I: Assam frequently experiences severe flooding and displacement of people.

Statement-II: Assam has more than hundred rivers, many originating from extreme rainfall areas.

 Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?
 - Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I**
 - Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
 - Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
 - Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct
- Which of the following applications of Genome editing are correct?
 - Developing personalised medicine
 - Restoring endangered species
 - Enhancing Crop yield
 - Enhance breeding and seed production of Fishes
 Select the answer using the code given below:
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3 only
 - 1, 2, 3 and 4**
- Consider the following statements regarding practice of expunging remarks in the Indian Parliament:
 - It is the discretionary power of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha under Article 105 of the constitution.
 - Anyone publishing Expunged remarks, is liable to face charges for breach of privilege of the House.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only**
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Consider the following statements regarding Charaideo 'Moidam':
 - It is a place where Ahoms buried their dead.
 - The size of a Moidam reflects the power or status of the person buried.
 - It is listed in UNESCO World Heritage List.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 1 and 2**
 - 2 and 3
 - 3 only
- Consider the following statements about the Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN):
 - The DBN is introduced by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to enhance telecommunications services in underserved areas.
 - DBN replaced the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).
 - The DBN contribution is credited to the Public Accounts of India.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 2 only**
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 2 and 3 only
- Consider the following statements about the Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC):
 - The main objective of SFAC is to facilitate agribusiness projects by small farmers and to promote farmer producer organizations (FPOs).
 - SFAC operates under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India.
 - SFAC provides venture capital assistance and project development facilities to agribusiness projects.
 How many of the above statements is/are correct?
 - Only one
 - Only two
 - All three**
 - None
- Consider the following statements:
 - The weightage of food in Consumer Price Index (CPI) is higher than that in Wholesale Price Index (WPI).
 - The WPI does not capture changes in the prices of services, which CPI does.
 - The Reserve Bank of India has now adopted WPI as its key measure of inflation and to decide on changing the key policy rates.
 How many of the above statements are correct?
 - Only one
 - Only two**
 - All three
 - None