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MCQs

THE HINDU

A timely reset for the Food Security Act

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in Focus?

- India's food-security debate is shifting from ensuring **foodgrain availability** to ensuring access to a **healthy and nutritious diet**.
- The **draft National Food Security (Amendment) Bill, 2026** proposes changes in Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) entitlements based on household size.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) is an Indian government scheme launched on **December 25, 2000**. It gives 35 kg of food grains every month to eligible poor families.

Key Highlights

- The share of households unable to afford the **ICMR-NIN (Indian Council of Medical Research–National Institute of Nutrition) recommended diet** declined from about **52% in 2011-12 to 25% in 2023-24**, showing improvement in food affordability, though a large section still struggles to afford a healthy diet.

- Under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**, Priority Households receive **5 kg of foodgrains per person per month**, while AAY households receive **35 kg per household per month**.
- The amendment proposes **7 kg per person, subject to a maximum of 35 kg per household**, which may reduce benefits for smaller AAY households.

This means a **2-member AAY family would get 14 kg and a 4-member family 28 kg**, compared with the existing 35 kg for every **AAY household**, while families with 5 or more members would continue to receive 35 kg

- Household size does not always reflect vulnerability, as many small households include **elderly persons, widows and persons with disabilities**.
- NFSA coverage is still based on the **2011 Census** and the ceiling of **81.35 crore beneficiaries**, highlighting the need for revision after **Census 2027**.
- India faces a **double burden of malnutrition**, with persistent undernutrition alongside rising **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** such as diabetes.
- The **Public Distribution System (PDS)** needs to support dietary diversification through **pulses, millets and other nutritious foods**, instead of focusing mainly on cereals.

Implications

- A per-person AAY formula may **reduce foodgrain support for vulnerable small households**.



- Outdated NFSA coverage can lead to **exclusion of eligible beneficiaries**.
- Rice and wheat can address hunger but cannot adequately tackle **protein and micronutrient deficiencies**.
- India must simultaneously address **undernutrition and rising lifestyle-related diseases**.
- Expanding nutritious food support requires stronger **procurement, storage and distribution systems**.
- Digitalisation through **e-Pos (electronic Point of Sale) devices and One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)** has improved PDS delivery, but authentication failures and lack of offline alternatives can still prevent beneficiaries from receiving their entitlements

Way Forward

- Ensure a **no-loss guarantee** so that no AAY household receives less than the existing **35 kg entitlement**.
- Update NFSA coverage using **latest population and deprivation data** with effective grievance-redressal mechanisms.
- Promote **dietary diversification** through pulses, millets, milk, eggs and other locally suitable foods without reducing cereal entitlements.
- Strengthen convergence between **PDS, Anganwadi Services, PM POSHAN and healthcare systems**.
- Expand reforms through **evidence-based State-level pilots** before nationwide implementation.

Mains Question

"India's food-security policy must move beyond providing adequate foodgrains towards ensuring access to affordable and nutritious diets." Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)

Military transformation, intellectual leadership

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Why in Focus?

- India's military reform aims to improve **jointness and operational effectiveness among the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force**.
- Despite several reforms since 2014, greater **integration among the three services** and stronger strategic thinking within the Higher Defence Organisation are still needed.

Key Highlights

- In 2014, the Prime Minister called for faster reforms in the **Army, Navy and Air Force** to improve **operational effectiveness, inter-service synergy and reduce duplication**.
- The three services have different organisational structures and operational priorities, making **jointness and integration** a major reform challenge.
- The article points to an **intellectual gap among senior military leadership**, as operational responsibilities often leave limited time for research, writing and strategic thinking.
- Stronger intellectual engagement is important because modern warfare increasingly involves **cyber, space, artificial intelligence, drones and multi-domain operations**, requiring the three services to operate together.
- **Professional Military Education (PME)** through military training institutions and war colleges provides a strong base for developing strategic and intellectual capabilities among senior officers.
- Greater cooperation between the **Army, Navy, Air Force, Ministry of Defence, universities and think tanks** can help develop better ideas for military transformation.

Implications

- **Limited inter-service integration** can create duplication and reduce the effectiveness of joint military operations.
- Differences in **service culture, priorities and organisational interests** can slow down military integration.



- A highly hierarchical structure may discourage **constructive dissent, innovation and independent strategic thinking**.
- Excessive focus on operational duties can reduce the time available for **research, strategic analysis and professional writing**.
- Weak coordination between military institutions and the wider government can hinder a **whole-of-government approach to national security**.

Way Forward

- Strengthen **jointness among the Army, Navy and Air Force** through integrated structures, joint training and common operational planning.
- Reform **Professional Military Education (PME)** to give officers greater exposure to geopolitics, technology, economics and national security.
- Encourage **research, professional debate and constructive dissent** within the armed forces.
- Improve collaboration among the **three services, Ministry of Defence, universities and strategic think tanks**.
- Create a stronger **whole-of-government approach** so that military reforms are aligned with India's diplomatic, economic, technological and security capabilities.

Mains Question

"Military transformation requires not only organisational restructuring but also intellectual transformation within the armed forces." Discuss in the context of India's efforts towards military integration and higher defence reform. (15 marks, 250 words)

How sustainable is India's E20 push?

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies 3

Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Why in Focus?

- The **E20 program** has triggered debate over its impact on **vehicles, food security, and ethanol imports**.
- India aims to blend **20% ethanol with petrol**, reducing dependence on imported crude oil and keeping more money within the domestic economy.

Key Highlights

- India has around **18–20 billion litres** of distillery capacity across **500 distilleries**.
 - ◆ Oil companies have contracted around **10.5 billion litres** for the current ethanol year.
- For petrol blending, about **45%** of ethanol comes from **maize, 22% from FCI rice, 16% from sugarcane juice, 10% from B-heavy molasses, 4.5% from damaged foodgrains, and 1.1% from C-heavy molasses**.
- India's **maize production** increased by **45% over three years, reaching 55 million tonnes in 2025-26; more than 20%** is used for ethanol.
- Direct **ethanol imports for petrol blending are banned**, and there is currently no evidence of a surge in maize imports.
- Vehicles manufactured after **April 2023** were factory-engineered for E20 and include **ethanol-resistant components**.
- Older vehicles designed for **E5/E10** may experience **fuel system deterioration and mileage loss** due to ethanol's properties.
- Government and manufacturer studies indicate a loss of **efficiency of around 2-6%** in some E10-designed vehicles, while consumer surveys and independent mechanics have reported additional concerns.
- India achieved **10% ethanol blending in 2022** and increased it towards **20% within three years**, raising concerns about the pace and transparency of the transition.
- The government states that ethanol blending has helped save around **₹2 lakh crore in foreign exchange** and substitute about **32 million tonnes of crude oil imports**.
- Ethanol blending can reduce **dependence on crude oil imports**, but its impact on petrol prices is difficult to determine because ethanol



and petrol follow **different pricing and tax structures**.

Implications

- Around **77% of the petrol vehicle fleet** consists of older vehicles designed for E5/E10, raising concerns about compatibility.
- Greater diversion of **rice, maize and sugarcane products** to ethanol could become a concern during **poor monsoons, crop losses or foodgrain shortages**.
- A fall in domestic maize or other feedstock production could increase the possibility of **corn imports**.
- A more **phased and transparent rollout**, with adequate consumer information and manufacturer guidance, could reduce uncertainty.

Way Forward

- Strengthen **vehicle testing and monitoring** to assess the long-term impact of ethanol blends.
- Maintain a balance between **ethanol production, food security and sugar availability**.
- Continue ethanol blending as part of efforts to reduce **crude oil imports and foreign exchange outgo**, while regularly assessing its economic and environmental costs.
- Provide **clear public awareness on E20 vehicle maintenance**, including its impacts and precautions.

Mains Question

"The E20 ethanol-blending programme can reduce India's dependence on imported crude oil, but its rapid implementation raises concerns over vehicle compatibility and food security." Discuss. (150 Words)

Supreme Court clarifies scope of police custody under BNSS

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Indian Polity and Governance – Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies 2

Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries

Why in Focus?

- The **Supreme Court**, in *State of Andhra Pradesh v. Suda Suresh Veera Venkata Naga Raju*, clarified the scope of **police custody under Section 187(2) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)**.

Key Highlights

- **Section 187(2) BNSS** allows up to **15 days of police custody**, which need not be **continuous** and can be taken in **separate periods** during the first **40 or 60 days** of detention.
- **Section 38 of the BNSS** allows an **arrested person to meet an advocate of their choice during interrogation**, but the **advocate need not be present continuously throughout the interrogation**.
- Continuous recording of the accused's movement is not required; **audio-visual recording of the interrogation and recovery proceedings is sufficient**.
- **Section 187(3) of the BNSS** permits detention for up to **90 days for serious offenses** and **60 days for other offenses**.
- Failure to complete the investigation within the prescribed period may result in **default bail**.
- **Section 58 BNSS** states that a person arrested without a warrant cannot be detained for more than **24 hours** without a **magistrate's authorization under Section 187**.

Implications

- The expanded custody window provides **greater flexibility to investigating agencies**.
- The provision allows police to seek custody when **fresh evidence or leads emerge** during the investigation.
- **Judicial oversight** becomes more important with the wider window for police custody.
- **Access to legal assistance and audio-visual recording** provides safeguards against custodial misuse.
- The framework requires a balance between

effective investigation and individual rights.

Way Forward

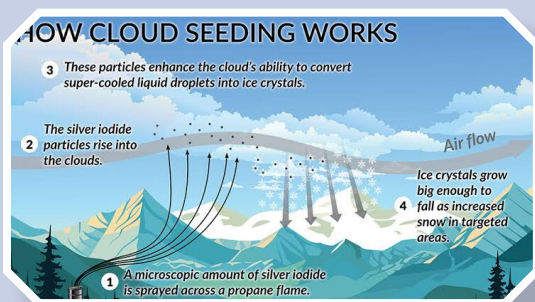
- Ensure **strict judicial scrutiny** while granting police custody.
- Strengthen **audio-visual recording** of interrogation and recovery proceedings.
- Prevent **custodial abuse** through stronger monitoring and accountability.
- Maintain a balance between **investigative needs and fundamental rights**.

Mains Question

“The BNSS has expanded the window for seeking police custody while retaining safeguards for accused persons.” Discuss the changes introduced by the BNSS and examine their implications for criminal investigation and individual rights. (150 Words)

KEYWORDS

Cloud Seeding



- **Cloud seeding** is a **weather modification technique** used to increase rainfall from **existing clouds**.
- Substances such as **silver iodide**, **potassium iodide**, and **salt particles** are dispersed into clouds using **aircraft or rockets**.
- These particles act as **condensation nuclei**, around which **water vapor condenses** to form water droplets.
- The droplets can grow large and heavy enough to **fall as rain**.
- Cloud seeding requires **moisture-laden clouds** and **cannot produce rain from clear skies**.
- It may increase rainfall by around **10–20%**, but its effectiveness depends strongly on **weather conditions**.

Sprite Tejas Express



- India's first private, branded train was launched by the **Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)** on the **Lucknow–Delhi** route.
- The train will operate as the “**Sprite Tejas Express**” after **IRCTC** awarded **Sprite train-branding rights** for **six months**.
- The branding rights were granted through a **Letter of Acceptance** issued by **IRCTC**.
- The train is officially identified as **Train No. 82501/82502**, operating between **Lucknow and Delhi**.
- The “**Sprite Tejas Express**” branding will be displayed at **originating and en route stations** on both sides of the journey.
- The initiative represents the use of **advertising and branding rights** on trains as an additional **revenue source for Indian Railways**.



Geotubes

- **Geotubes** are large, elongated tubular containers made from **high-strength, permeable geotextile fabrics** such as polypropylene and filled with **sand, silt or dredged slurry**.
- They act as **coastal or offshore barriers**, allowing water to drain through the fabric while retaining the sediment, thereby creating a stable structure that **absorbs and dissipates wave energy**.
- By reducing the impact of waves on the shore, Geotubes help **prevent coastal erosion** and promote **natural sand accumulation**, supporting beach nourishment and restoration.
- Compared to traditional structures such as **concrete or rock seawalls**, Geotubes are relatively **cost-effective, eco-friendly and adaptable**, with applications in **flood control, riverbank stabilization, wetland restoration and industrial sludge dewatering**.



Places in News

Black Sea



- The **Black Sea** is a large **inland sea** located in the **southeastern part of Europe**.
- It is bordered by **Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Türkiye, Bulgaria, and Romania**.
- The **Crimean Peninsula** extends into the Black Sea from the north, while the **Kerch Strait** connects it to the **Sea of Azov**.
- The sea has **few islands**, with **Zmiyinyy (Fidonisi)** of Ukraine being the largest.
- Geologically, the Black Sea is considered a remnant of the ancient **Tethys Sea**, with its present form emerging around the end of the **Paleocene Epoch**.

Novorossiysk

- It is a **major city and port** in the **Krasnodar region of southwestern Russia**, situated on the **northeastern coast of the Black Sea**.
- The city hosts a **highly strategic military facility** and is considered the **last major stronghold for the Russian naval fleet** operating in the Black Sea.
- It is **Russia's largest commercial seaport** and serves as a critical **export gateway for agricultural products and grain shipments**.
- The port is a vital **chokepoint for global energy markets**, handling a significant share of **Russia's oil exports** and serving as a major maritime transit terminal for **crude oil from Kazakhstan**.



Species In News

Amolops ammachi

- *Amolops ammachi* is a **newly discovered species of cascade frog** identified in **Northeast India** after more than **15 years of extensive field research**, along with two other new species, *Amolops sendenyu* and *Amolops bella*.
- It was discovered in the **Jampui Hills of Tripura**, where it inhabits **fast-flowing forest streams** typical of cascade frogs.
- The species is named in honour of the late **Kerala social worker and philanthropist Padmini Varkey**, affectionately known as **“Ammachi” (mother)**.
- It belongs to the genus *Amolops*, a group of **stream-dwelling amphibians** adapted to living in **torrential and high-velocity waters**.
- DNA testing shows that these frogs **split into many different species about 32 million years ago**. This major expansion happened because the **rising Himalayas created new mountain rivers and habitats**, coinciding with a major period of ancient climate change known as the **Eocene-Oligocene transition**.

