

### Surajkund International Crafts Mela

- ❖ Surajkundmela is an annual confluence of India's culture and folk traditions is taking place at Faridabad, Haryana.
- ❖ It is a spectacular showcase of regional and international crafts, handlooms, traditions along with multi-cuisine food for the visitors.
- ❖ The theme state for this edition is Uttar Pradesh.
- ❖ The Mela is organized by the SurajkundMela Authority & Haryana Tourism in collaboration with Union Ministries of Tourism, Textiles, Culture and External Affairs

### Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched the 'Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)'.
- Its objective is to provide senior citizens belonging to BPL category, who suffer from age related disabilities, with such physical aids and assisted living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions.
- The Scheme is entirely funded from the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund (SCWF).
- Under the Scheme, assisted living devices such as walking sticks, elbow crutches, walkers/ crutches, tripods/ quadpods, hearing aids, wheelchairs, artificial dentures, spectacles are distributed to the beneficiary senior citizen.

### Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandhana Yojana

- This scheme deals with senior citizen insurance scheme which promises assured annual return of 8% for 10 years.
- The insurance is sold by Life Insurance of India for the citizens.
- The Minimum age of entry is 60 years of age with no maximum limit.

### Tiger Census

- India's tiger census has been commissioned by the union environment ministry's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).
- The census will see coordination with **Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh** in estimating the territorial spread of the animal in the subcontinent.
- The Wildlife Institute of India, a Union Environment Ministry-funded body, has been tasked with coordinating the tiger estimation exercise.
- Along with tigers, the survey also collects information on the prey population of deer and other animals.
- The techniques used to estimate tiger population are Pugmark Technique, camera trapping and DNA finger-printing.

### Vadnagar

- Gujarat and the Centre are jointly developing the historical and ancient town of Vadnagar as a major tourist hub.

- The projects cover Vadnagar's famous Kirti Toran, Sharmishtha lake, Hatkeshwar Temple and archaeological sites.
- The town full is of sites that are related to Hinduism and Buddhism
- The famous Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang has visited the place around AD 640 and referred to it as Anandpur.
- It is also the birth place of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

### Udhyagiri Caves

- The Udayagiri caves, in Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, contain some of the oldest Hindu temples and iconography, related to Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism.
- They were built during the Gupta period (350-550 CE)
- Though it is present north of Tropic of Cancer, it is believed that historically, on the day of summer solstice, the sun was directly overhead in this place, making Udhyagiri (Mount of sunrise) a place of worship.
- It also houses some important Gupta age inscriptions.
- Iconic **Varaha Sculpture** rescuing the earth symbolically represented by Bhudevi clinging to the boar's tusk as described in Hindu mythology is a salient feature of the place.



### Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)

- The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) is a public interest research and advocacy organization based in New Delhi.
- The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has been ranked the top environment policy think tanks in India and 16<sup>th</sup> at the global level.

- The rank was given by The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.
- The CSE's efforts are built around five broad programs
  1. Communication for Awareness
  2. Research and Advocacy
  3. Education and Training
  4. Knowledge portal
  5. Pollution monitoring
- CSE publishes the fortnightly Magazine '**Down to Earth**'.

## Food Inflation and Consumption Pattern

### What is the issue?

The dichotomy in the consumption pattern in India calls for addressing the declining trend in food inflation to increase agricultural income.

### How is the consumption pattern?

- **Upper-end consumption appears steady.**
- E.g. Growth in sales of cars and consumer durables is healthy.
- Also, airline traffic has been growing so rapidly, as an indication of the above trend.
- However, indicators of **broad-based consumption** are **weak**.
- Volume growth in consumer staples (soaps, shampoos, etc) remains weak.
- Indicators of consumption in India thus point to a **two-speed economy**.

### How are food prices a reason for this?

- **Relation** - Nearly 45% of the workforce has primary employment in agriculture.
- So, roughly, about half of India is a net 'producer' of food and the other half is a net 'consumer' of food.
- Thus, food prices, in a way, mean transfers from the consumer to the producer.
- **Effect** - Conceptually, in this case, the consumers are taken to be the 'rich' and producers are taken to be the 'poor'.

- In this sense, inflation in food translates to increased transfers from the 'rich' to the 'poor' or the agricultural ecosystem in general.
- In other words, if food inflation drops, only a lesser amount gets transferred.
- Lesser transfers translate to being a driver of weak broad-based consumption among the population in primary employment.
- On the other hand, the portion not transferred/retained by the 'consumers' due to lower prices, takes the form of financial savings.
- This in turn is the reason for sustained growth in Upper-end consumption of the 'rich'.
- This partly explains the dichotomy existing in the consumption pattern in India.
- **Past Trends** - Since 1960, average annual growth in agricultural output (as measured by real GDP growth) has been 2.5%.
- And average annual price growth has been 7.5%.
- Despite the relative weak output growth, aggregate income in agriculture kept growing due to the rising prices.
- This was also an important reason for the growing number of workers in agriculture.

### **Why is the slowdown in food inflation?**

- ✓ Food price inflation has slowed primarily due to **over-supply**.
- ✓ Improving agricultural **productivity** due to better access to roads, phones, electricity, and credit is increasing the supply.
- ✓ The **fiscal discipline** also has considerably helped in increased food supply.
- ✓ India does have one of the highest deficits in the world at present.
- ✓ However, deficits currently are the lowest in the last four decades.

### **What are the implications?**

- ✚ It is not to be denied that sustained high food price growth had some serious side-effects for the economy.
- ✚ These include chronic inflation, high interest rates, and frequent spells of currency weakness.
- ✚ However, weak food price inflation as well has some worrying implications that India is currently witnessing.
- ✚ If half of the workforce has weak income growth, their consumption slows.

- ✚ E.g. they stop adding rooms to their houses or moving from kuchcha mud huts to pukka brick-and-cement houses.
- ✚ There is also no easy mechanism to route financial savings from the top half to support consumption of the bottom-half.
- ✚ Options to create jobs at a scale that provide alternative employment are also weak.

### What is the way forward?

- ❖ **Food price raise** can engineer transfers and ensure funds flow through agricultural markets.
- ❖ But it is hard to engineer price increases in a commodity that is in oversupply.
- ❖ In this line, the recent Budget promised to set minimum support prices (MSPs) that guarantee a 50% margin to farmers.
- ❖ However, how effectively can MSP bring parity among different crops and ensure a benefitting price rise scenario is doubtful.
- ❖ **Agricultural exports** should be addressed as a sustainable and non-inflationary path.
- ❖ This can go a long way in improving agricultural and national incomes.
- ❖ Income growth would also create demand for manufactured goods that can stimulate the much awaited manufacturing revival.
- ❖ Food processing for domestic as well as export demand can also create employment opportunities.
- ❖ Re-skilling the tens of millions of farm workers, to take on non-agricultural jobs, also needs attention.

### Agni-I missile

Topic: indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

- Indigenously developed Agni-I ballistic missile that can carry a nuclear payload was recently flight tested as part of a user trial by the Army from a test range off the Odisha coast. It was 18th version of Agni-I, which could achieve all parameters within the stipulated time period.
- Agni-1 is an indigenously developed surface-to-surface, single-stage nuclear capable missile. It was developed by the Advanced Systems Laboratory or ASL in collaboration with the Defence Research Development Laboratory (DRDL) and the Research Centre Imarat (RCI). The missile was integrated by the Bharat Dynamics Limited, Hyderabad.



- Weighing around 12 tonnes, the 15-metre-long Agni-I can carry payloads up to 1,000 kg and is capable of hitting a target beyond 700 km. The missile is also capable of carrying nuclear warheads.
- The sophisticated Agni-I missile is propelled by a solid rocket propellant system and is equipped with a specialised navigation system that ensures it reaches the target with a high degree of precision. The missile was inducted into service in 2004.

### **Security Check Kiya campaign**

Topic: cybersecurity.

To create awareness around Internet safety, Google India has launched a public initiative “#SecurityCheckKiya”.

It aims to protect young and first-time web users from account hijacking, safeguard Android devices from malicious apps and secure all their personal data if they lose their device. Under the campaign, Google encouraged users to take the first step of Security Check on Safer Internet Day which will be celebrated on February 6.

People can follow a three-step action to stay safe on the web. To protect account hijacking, all Android devices and Gmail users can review their security settings and Google account activity with one click “Google Security”. This automatically scans for any vulnerability and guides users to keep their account safe.

To safeguard Android devices from malicious apps, users can scan and check Android device for any harmful apps through Google Play Protect.

Google Play Protect scans all apps for malware before and after you install them and is automatically enabled on your device. To secure all personal data if an Android device is lost, users can download “Find My Device” app and it will help you to easily locate a lost Android device and keeps device and information secure.

### **What necessitated this move?**

With a large base of unsuspecting first time Internet users now coming online through easy access modes but lacking technical literacy, Indian users are increasingly vulnerable to bad actors and abuse on the web.

Sources: the hindu.

## **India 'disturbed' by emergency in Maldives**

India issued a statement of concern over the growing crisis in the Maldives.

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that India is disturbed by the declaration of a state of emergency and also by the suspension of constitutional rights of the people of the Maldives.

The government also criticised the arrest of the Supreme Court Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed and former President Abdul Gayoom adding that it “continues to carefully monitor the situation”.

### **China rejects foreign meddling in Male**

Rejecting foreign meddling, China expressed confidence that the escalating political crisis in the Maldives will find a home-grown solution.

According to Chinese Foreign Ministry, the Maldives government and political parties have the wisdom and the capability to deal with the current situation on their own.

China's emphasis on seeking a domestically driven breakthrough follows a call by the former Maldivian President, Mohamed Nasheed, for India's support in the release of political prisoners.

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## **Palestine asks Modi to mediate**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Palestine is “historic” and will be important in the West Asian peace process, according to Palestine officials.

They say “India, now, has a greater role in the political process with the decline of the U.S. role in mediation”.

Modi's visit will be at an important juncture when Palestine needs India to interact much more with the region.

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## **Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh to be part of India's tiger census**

India's tiger census will see coordination with Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh in estimating the territorial spread of the animal in the subcontinent.

While India has engaged with Nepal and Bangladesh in previous tiger counts, this is the first time all countries are uniting in arriving at tiger numbers, particularly in regions with shared borders.

Since 2006, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) — a Union Environment Ministry-funded body — has been tasked with coordinating the tiger estimation exercise.

The once-in-four-years exercise calculated, in 2006, that India had only 1,411 tigers. This rose to 1,706 in 2010 and 2,226 in 2014 in later editions.

The survey — divided into four phases — began last winter and is expected to reveal its findings in early 2019.

The Survey was commissioned by the Union Environment Ministry's National Tiger Conservation Authority.

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