

Horticultural Diversification: A Pathway to Agricultural Resilience

Diversifying agriculture towards high-value crops like horticulture can boost rural economies, as noted in a recent RBI Bulletin.

About Horticulture Sector

➤ It is a vast and diverse field that encompasses the cultivation, production, processing, and marketing of **fruits, vegetables, flowers, and ornamental plants**.

➤ India is the **second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables globally, next to China**.

Key trends in Horticultural Diversification

➤ **Primary Engine of Agricultural Growth:** Contribution to **Agriculture Gross Value Added (GVA) is 33%**.

➤ **Shifting Dietary Preferences:** Rising share of fruits in total food expenditure in both rural and urban areas.

➤ **Participation of Small and Marginal Farmers:** Allocating a larger share of their landholdings to horticulture.

Key Issues/Challenges

➤ **Yield Fluctuations:** For instance, grape and sapota yields declined between 1992-93 and 2021-22.

➤ **Inadequate Post-Harvest Storage Capacity:** India experiences substantial post-harvest losses, **estimated at around ₹1.5 trillion annually**.

➤ **Price Volatility:** E.g., weather conditions causing fluctuations in prices for Tomato, Onion, and Potato (TOP).

Future Policy Considerations

➤ **Stronger Market Linkages:** Establishing robust connections between farmers and both export markets and urban consumers is critical.

➤ **Intercropping:** Promoting intercropping of horticultural and non-horticultural crops can improve yields, enhance soil health, and augment farmer incomes.

➤ **Agricultural Research:** To develop technologies that address emerging challenges like climate change and pest management, while also improving productivity.

➤ **Develop Agro-processing Industries:** For higher export growth, reduce post-harvest losses, and generate employment opportunities in the rural economy.

Initiatives for Horticulture Sector



Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), 2014



Cluster Development Programme



Coordinated programme on Horticulture Assessment and Management using geoinformatics (CHAMAN)



Clean Plant Programme (CPP) for high-quality planting material

India & Japan Seal Multiple Pacts and Vision Plan for the Next Decade

Japan set the investment target of **10 trillion yen in India over a decade** as India - Japan announced Joint Vision for the Next Decade with a roadmap to bolster cooperation in the **15th India-Japan Annual Summit**.

Key outcomes of Summit

➤ **India-Japan Joint Vision for the Next Decade:** A 10-year strategic framework **across eight areas:** economic partnership, economic security, mobility, technology and innovation, etc.

➤ **Joint declaration on security Cooperation:** Comprehensive framework to enhance defense and security cooperation. (**Launched Economic Security Initiative**).

➤ **Action Plan for India-Japan Human Resource Exchange:** It promotes **two-way exchange of 500,000 people**, including 50,000 skilled and semi-skilled Indians over five years. (**Next-General Mobility Partnership**)

➤ **Cooperation on Joint Crediting Mechanism:** Promote Japanese investment in India and India's sustainable development.

➤ **India-Japan Digital Partnership 2.0:** Collaboration and joint R&D in futuristic technological fields such as AI, etc. (**Launched India-Japan AI Initiative**)

➤ **Others:** MoUs in the field of Mineral Resources, **Joint Lunar Polar Exploration Mission, Clean Hydrogen and Ammonia** (Sustainable Fuel Initiative), Cooperation on Cultural Exchange, Domestic Waste Water Management, etc.

Significance of Japan-India relations

➤ **Convergence of Strategic Interests:** China's military and political interventions in the Indo-Pacific, specifically in the South China Sea.

➤ **Defence Relationship:** Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and Military Exercises: Dharma Guardian, Shinyuu Maitri, JIMEX.

➤ **Reformed Multilateralism:** Both supports reforms at UNSC and is part of multiple global groupings such as Quad, G20, G4.

➤ **Industrial Development:** India-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership, India - Japan Small and Medium Enterprises Forum, etc.

United Nations Development Programme Release Report "Securing Rights, Enabling Futures"

This report examines **Forest Right Act (FRA) implementation** over two decades in Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Odisha, highlighting innovations, challenges, and persistent gaps.

About Forest Rights Act, 2006

➤ **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition Of Forest Rights) Act**, popularly known as FRA was enacted in 2006.

➤ **Objective:** To undo historical injustice occurred to forest dwelling communities; ensure their livelihood & food security, etc.

Challenges in FRA Implementation

➤ **High Rejection Rates:** Due to procedural errors, lack of documentation, or misinterpretation of FRA provisions.

➤ **Recording of Rights:** Poor quality of land records and incomplete recognition processes.

➤ **Post-Recognition Issues:** Difficulties in delineating **Community Forest Resources (CFRs)** and forming **Community Forest Resource Management Committees (CFRMCs)**.

➤ **Institutional Capacity Gaps:** Weak capacity at central and state levels, coupled with poor inter-departmental coordination.

➤ **Other issues:** Social and Knowledge Barriers, Uneven implementation across states, Limited integration of Gram Sabha in process, etc.

Key Recommendations from UNDP Report

➤ **Recognizing forest rights holders as a category** across all social protection and livelihood programs.

➤ Provide **dedicated funds** for FRA right holders under national and state schemes.

➤ **Link FRA with national rural livelihood mission (NRLM)**, ensuring gender-sensitive livelihood opportunities.

➤ **Introduce a sunset clause** to fix an end date for recognition and vesting of rights.

➤ **Strengthen post-rights support**, moving beyond a welfare approach to community empowerment.

➤ **Ensure integration of FRA with PESA (Provisions of the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996** for holistic governance.



Parliamentary Committees are "Backbone of Parliamentary Democracy: Lok Sabha Speaker"

He made this remark at the inauguration of the **National Conference of Chairpersons of Committees of Parliament and State Legislatures** on the Welfare of SCs and STs.

Role of Parliamentary Committee

➤ **Non-Partisan Functioning & Consensus Building:** It fosters **cross-party consensus** as it includes members from multiple parties including opposition parties.

➤ **Domain Expertise:** E.g., The Committee on Health studied Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016.

➤ **Ensures government accountability:** E.g., The **Public Accounts Committee** in 2024 flagged excess spending by four ministries.

➤ **Focus on developmental issues:** e.g. The **Committee on Rural Development** flagged declining successive budgetary allocations to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

➤ **Strengthen laws passed by parliament:** E.g., **Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019** was revised due to insights given by **joint parliamentary committee**.

Challenges in functioning of Parliamentary Committee

➤ **Referral of Bills to Committees is not Mandatory:** Declining trend in the percentage of bills being referred to a Committee has been observed. E.g., 15th Lok Sabha (71%), 16th (28%), 17th (16%).

➤ **Low Participation:** Attendance of MPs in Committee meetings is ~50%, which is lower than the 84% attendance during the Parliament sittings.

➤ **Lack of Expert and Research Support:** Parliamentary Committees are frequently Understaffed and lack full-time technical expert and research support.

Steps to be Taken

➤ **Referring Bills to Committees**-can be made mandatory like in **United Kingdom**.

➤ **Increase Transparency:** Specify reasons for rejecting certain recommendations.

➤ **Enhance Research Support:** Allow Committees to retain expert advisors for informed scrutiny.



Two New Judge Appointments bring Supreme Court to Full Bench Strength of 34 Judges

The process of appointing a judge of the Supreme Court is governed by the **Collegium system**, which was established through a series of Supreme Court judgments.

About Collegium

- It is a system for making recommendations for **appointment of judges of SC and HC**.
- Judges are appointed by the President under **Article 124 and 217 (respectively for SC and HC) of the Constitution**.
- **For Appointment in SC:** Collegium consists of CJI and four other senior-most judges of the SC.
- **For Appointment in HC:** Collegium at SC consists of **CJI and two seniormost Judges of the SC**.

Evolution of the Collegium System in India

- **Pre-1980s:** Prior to the 1980s, judicial appointments were primarily under the control of the executive branch. **The President appointed judges in consultation** with the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- **First Judges Case (1981):** The Supreme Court ruled that the 'consultation' with the CJI was not equivalent to 'concurrence'.
⌚ Giving primacy to the executive in judicial appointments.
- **Second Judges Case (1993):** The court declared that 'consultation' meant 'concurrence', which gave birth to the Collegium system. Initially, the Collegium consisted of the CJI and two of the senior-most judges.
- **Third Judges Case (1998):** The Supreme Court **expanded the Collegium** to include the CJI and the four senior-most judges.
- **Fourth Judges Case (2015):** The **Supreme Court struck down the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)** and the **99th Constitutional Amendment Act**, deeming them **unconstitutional**. As a result, the **Collegium system was restored**.

Also in News



Purple Notice

The **Enforcement Directorate (ED)** issued its first Purple Notice through Interpol.

About Purple Notice

- A Purple Notice is one of **eight types of alerts** issued by Interpol.
- **Purpose:** It is specifically designed to provide information on the modus operandi, objects, devices, and concealment methods used by criminals.
- **Other notices:** Red, yellow, blue, Black, green, Orange, Silver Notice (pilot phase).
⌚ **INTERPOL–United Nations Security Council Special Notice:** Issued for entities and individuals who are the targets of UN Security Council Sanctions Committees.



Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)

Recently, Emerging Leaders Panel Discussion was held under Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) at **Kochi**.

About IONS

- It is a voluntary initiative **launched by Indian Navy**.
- **Aim:** To increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region.
- Its **inaugural session** was held in 2008 in New Delhi.
- **Membership:** 25 members and 9 observers
⌚ **Eligibility-** A nation state with permanent territory or border with Indian Ocean and which maintains a Navy or maritime agency.
⌚ **Chair** of IONS will be rotated every **2 years**. India to chair during 2025-27.



State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI), 2024

Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Tripura are top performers in their respective groups in State Energy Efficiency Index 2024 (**sixth edition**).

About State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI)

- **Developed By:** Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in association with the **Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE)**.
- **Purpose:** The index assesses the energy efficiency performance of **36 States and Union Territories (UTs)** supporting data-driven monitoring, best practice sharing, and healthy competition.
- **States are Classified into Four Performance Categories:** Front Runners (>60%), Achievers (50-60%), Contenders (30-50%), and Aspirants (<30%).
⌚ The State Energy Efficiency Action Plans initiated by BEE, are crucial in integrating energy efficiency into the most energy-intensive sectors.



Karen and Karenni Ethnic Group

Thailand has granted work rights to **long-term refugees Karenni and Karen from Myanmar**.

About Karen

- The Karen are a large and **dispersed ethnic group of Southeast Asia**.
- They trace their **origins to the Gobi Desert, Mongolia, or Tibet**.

About Karenni

- Minority group in Myanmar, also known as the **Red Karen or Kayah**.



Conocarpus Trees

Recently, a government-appointed panel has recommended the Supreme Court to ban a **exotic tree** species called Conocarpus.

About Conocarpus (buttonwood or damas)

➤ **Origin:** It has 2 species:-

- One is native to the coastal areas of tropical America, and parts of West Africa and
- The other is found in arid coastal zones of Somalia and Yemen and across eastern and northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.



➤ **Why planted in India:** It is an **ornamental plant** and provides **green canopy in and is tolerant to heat, salinity, air, dust pollution** and needs minimal maintenance.

➤ **Concerns:**

- **Threat to biodiversity:** Offers little sustenance for native insects, birds, or mammals and is invasive. (also known as "green desert")
- **Threat to ecosystem:** Excessive groundwater consumption
- **Public health:** Allergenic pollen

➤ Earlier **Gujarat** and **Tamil Nadu** have banned it.



National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

The Prime Minister nominated two people as new members of the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** and renominated three existing members for three years.

About National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

- **Head:** NDMA is headed by the **Prime Minister of India**, is the apex body for Disaster Management in India.
- **Under:** Mandated by the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**.
- **Mandate:** To lay down the policies, plans and guidelines for Disaster Management.
- **Vision:** To build a safer and disaster resilient India by a holistic, pro-active, technology driven, and sustainable development strategy.



UNTOC & UNCAC

Recently, UNTOC and UNCAC have been invoked by India in the extradition request of a fugitive offender.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)

- A UN treaty to combat transnational organized crime, adopted in 2000 and entered into force in 2003.
- It is supplemented by **three protocols** targeting human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and illicit firearms manufacturing, and trafficking.
- **UNTOC (also known as Palermo Convention)**, it is the only global, legally binding instrument through which governments commit to act and cooperate against organized crime.
- **The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** serves as Secretariat to UNTOC.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

- The **only** legally binding **Universal Anti-corruption Instrument**, adopted in 2000 and entered into force in 2003.
- **Covers** a wide range of corruption forms, including bribery and embezzlement.
- It **focuses** on prevention, criminalization, international cooperation, and asset recovery.



Ranjit Sagar Dam

The Indian Army evacuated stranded CRPF personnel and civilians from flood-hit Madhopur Headworks after heavy discharge from Ranjit Sagar Dam.

Ranjit Sagar Dam (Thein Dam)

- **Location:** Near Pathankot, on the **Punjab-Jammu & Kashmir border**
- **River:** Ravi
- **Purpose:** Provides **Irrigation and Hydroelectric power** to Punjab and neighbouring states.



Personality in News



Major Dhyhan Chand (1905 - 1979)

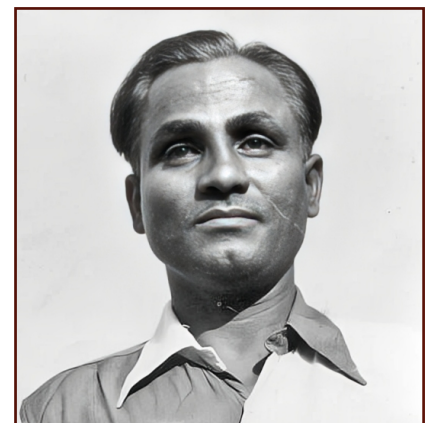
PM pays Tribute to Major Dhyhan Chand on National Sports Day.

Major Dhyhan Chand

- Famously known as '**Hockey Wizard**' and '**The Magician**' due to his stick work and understanding of the game.
- He enlisted in the British Indian Army as a sepoy (private).
- He played a crucial role in securing **India's Olympic gold medals** in 1928, 1932, and 1936.
- He received the **Padma Bhushan (1956)**.
- **Major Dhyhan Chand Khel Ratna Award**, given for outstanding sports performance over four years, is named in his honour.

Values

- Perseverance, discipline, sportsmanship, etc.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI