DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

31st December, 2023

S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	POPULATION CENSUS OF INDIA: SIGNIFICANCE & CHALLENGES
2.	PRELIMS POINTERS

POPULATION CENSUS OF INDIA: SIGNIFICANCE & CHALLENGES

SOURCE: THE HINDU

WHY IN NEWS?

➤ *The deadline to **freeze administrative boundaries for Census activities** has been **extended until June 30, 2024.***

➤ *The Census, **originally scheduled for 2020**, will be further delayed until at **least October 2024** due to the **time needed for enumerator list** preparation after boundary setting.*

➤ *The **Additional Registrar-General of India** issued a notification stating the extension, **marking the ninth such extension of the deadline.***

➤ *With the extension, the **Census won't precede the 2024 elections** expected in April and May, **impacting the schedule of the decennial exercise.***

POPULATION CENSUS IN INDIA:

➤ **Purpose and Scope**:
- ✓ A population census **involves the systematic collection, analysis, and dissemination of demographic, social, cultural, and economic data** for all individuals in a country.
- ✓ This comprehensive effort occurs at **regular intervals, typically every ten years**.

➤ **Administrative Significance:**
- ✓ In a diverse country like India, conducting a population census is **considered the largest administrative exercise** during peacetime due to the vast geographical and demographic variations.

➤ **Information Richness:**
- ✓ The **census provides a wealth of information**, including **details about households, available amenities, and various socio-economic and cultural attributes**.
- ✓ This data serves as a crucial **resource for planners, researchers, administrators,** and other users.

➤ **Decadal Tradition in India:**
- ✓ India has a proud tradition of conducting a **census every ten years**, making it one of the few countries **globally with such regularity**.
- ✓ This tradition dates back to ancient times, as evident in literature like the **'Rig Veda' and historical practices during the Mughal era.**

India - Population & Percentage Decadal Growth

➤ **Historical Context:**
- ✓ The roots of census-taking can be traced to ancient civilizations, **including ancient Rome, where it was employed for taxation purposes.**
- ✓ **In India, Kautilya's 'Arthasastra' emphasized census-taking as a state policy**, reflecting in-depth data collection even during the Mughal reign.
- ✓ India has a rich history of conducting regular **decennial Population Censuses since 1872.**
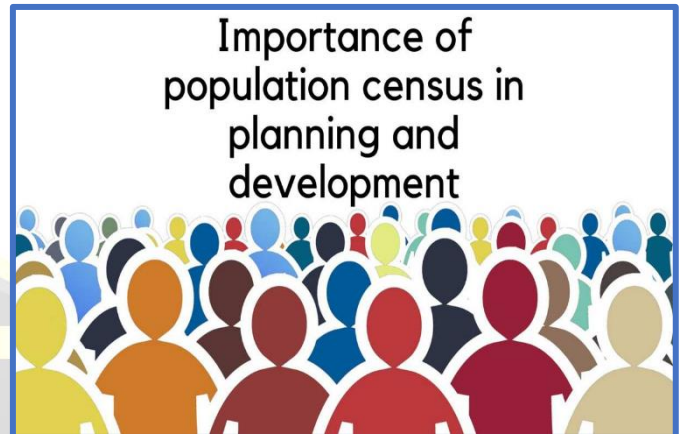
- ✓ **The last Census was in 2011**, marking **the 15th in the continuous series** since 1872 and the **7th since independence.**
- ✓ The **upcoming Census will be the 16th in the series** and the 8th since independence**.**

➢ **Post-Independence Era**:
  - ✓ The **history of the Indian Census is divided into two significant periods**: the **Pre-Independence** era and the **Post-Independence era.**
  - ✓ The census continues to be a **challenging yet fascinating endeavour**, providing insights into the evolving **socio-economic landscape of the nation**.

IMPORTANT OF CENSUS: (RSTV)

IMPORTANCE OF CENSUS: (RSTV)

➢ **Comprehensive Data Source:**
  - ✓ Census serves as a **vital data collection exercise**, providing insights into the demographic landscape of a nation.
  - ✓ Essential for various surveys in **health, education, and agriculture**, among others.

➢ **Decision-Making:**
  - ✓ Crucial for **evidence-based decision-making in a country.**
  - ✓ Data collected aids **administration, governance, and policy-making**, impacting various programs and initiatives.

Importance of population census in planning and development

➢ **Policy-Making:**
  - ✓ Plays a key role in the journey "**from a dwelling unit to the delivery unit.**"
  - ✓ Enhances coherence in **policy-making and scientific planning, optimizing resource allocation**.

➢ **Scholarly and Research Use:**
  - ✓ A valuable source for **scholars and researchers in diverse fields** such as demography, economics, and anthropology.
  - ✓ Data accessibility empowers grassroots administrative authorities for local developmental tasks.

➢ **Effective Targeting:**
  - ✓ **Facilitates effective targeting and improved delivery of government programs**, especially to marginalized sections of society.

➢ **Demarcation for Representation:**
  - ✓ **Used for the demarcation of constituencies** and the **allocation of representation in Parliament**, State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies.

➢ **Grant Allocation:**
  - ✓ **Finance Commission relies on Census data** for providing grants to states, basing allocations on population figures.
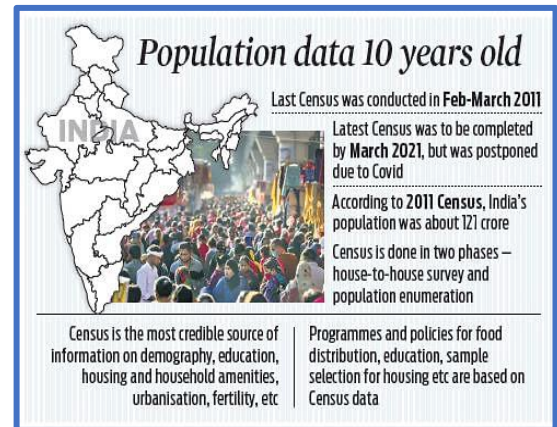
RECENT CHALLENGES OF CENSUS IN INDIA:

➢ **Unprecedented Delay:**
  - ✓ The **2021 census in India faces an unprecedented delay**, disrupting the usual decennial schedule.
  - ✓ **The exercise, originally set for 2021**, was **postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic** and **remains uncertain with this ninth extension**, causing concerns among experts.

➢ **Impact on Welfare Schemes:**
  - ✓ The delay **affects the public distribution system (PDS),** leading to e**xclusion of more than 100 million** people from **food welfare programs**.

- ✓ Dependence on outdated **population figures from the 2011 census** hampers accurate eligibility assessments.
- ➢ **Controversies and Criticisms:**
  - ✓ Controversies surround the **proposed National Population Register (NPR) linked** to the census, raising concerns about potential exclusion of **"doubtful citizens."**
  - ✓ Calls for a caste census add to the complexity, with **anticipated political and social ramifications**.
- ➢ **Data Quality Issues:**
  - ✓ The federal government faces **scrutiny over data quality and delays in releasing survey results**.
  - ✓ Previous instances, such as the withholding of a key survey result in 2019, raised questions about **transparency and independence** of statistical institutions.
- ➢ **Alternative Measures Insufficient:**
  - ✓ While some states conduct their own surveys, **these are considered stopgap measures and cannot replace the comprehensive national census.**
  - ✓ A credible national survey like the **census is indispensable for accurate and complete enumeration.**
- ➢ **International Repercussions:**
  - ✓ India's reputation, historically known for **aiding other countries in setting up censuses, may suffer internationally due to declining data integrity.**
  - ✓ Delay and potential data issues may impact the credibility of Indian statistics on a global scale.
- ➢ **Data Availability and Reports:**
  - ✓ The absence of **fresh Census data since 2011 impacts policy formulation**, while key reports from the Registrar-General of India (RGI) and the Census Commissioner on **vital statistics, births, deaths, and causes of deaths for 2021-2023 remain unreleased**.
- ➢ **Existing Data Gap:**
  - ✓ The **absence of a recent census contributes** to a **widening data gap, affecting studies like the National Sample Survey and National Family Health Survey** that rely on census data for sampling.

Population data 10 years old

Last Census was conducted in Feb-March 2011

Latest Census was to be completed by **March 2021**, but was postponed due to Covid

According to **2011 Census**, India's population was about 121 crore

Census is done in two phases — house-to-house survey and population enumeration

Census is the most credible source of information on demography, education, housing and household amenities, urbanisation, fertility, etc	Programmes and policies for food distribution, education, sample selection for housing etc are based on Census data

WAY FORWARD:

- ➢ **Accelerate Census Preparations:**
  - ✓ The **government should expedite preparations for the Census**, including the training and deployment of enumerators.
  - ✓ **Adequate resources and technology should be allocated** to ensure a swift and accurate data collection process.
- ➢ **Communication on Delimitation:**
  - ✓ The government **needs to provide a clear timeline for the post-election Census** and delimitation processes.
  - ✓ **Transparent communication will mitigate uncertainty and facilitate planning** for political and administrative entities.
- ➢ **Utilize Technology:**
  - ✓ Embrace technology for efficient data collection and processing during the Census.
  - ✓ This includes leveraging digital tools for enumerator training, survey administration, and data analysis, which can expedite the overall process.
- ➢ **Interim Data Solutions:**

- ✓ While **awaiting the completion of the Census**, the government should explore **interim solutions to bridge the data gap.**
- ✓ This **may involve utilizing advanced statistical models**, conducting **targeted surveys, or integrating data** from other reliable sources to inform policy decisions.

➢ **Release Pending Reports:**
- ✓ The government should **prioritize the release of pending vital statistics** and **reports on births, deaths, and causes of deaths.**
- ✓ Timely access to this information is **crucial for evidence-based policy formulation**, especially in areas such as **healthcare, family planning, and public health**.

PRELIMS POINTERS:

TOPIC	DISCRIPTION
Levy 20-30% health tax on food high in sugar, salt, fat: study	**WHY IN NEWS?**

WHY IN NEWS?
- ❖ *Health Tax Proposal:*
  - ☞ *The **imposition of a health tax ranging from 20% to 30**%, in addition to the **existing Goods and Services Tax (GST),** is under consideration for certain food items.*
  - ☞ *This proposal, put forth by **public health researchers**, is part of a study published in the **Journal of Health Policy and Planning**.*

BACKGROUND:
- ❖ **UNICEF-Funded Project:**
  - ☞ The health tax recommendation is an **outcome of a project funded by UNICEF.**
  - ☞ The study **aims to influence policies aimed at reducing the consumption** of sugar, **sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs)**, and **foods high in sugar, salt, and fat (HFSS).**

Improving health outcomes using sin tax
Currently, sugar sweetened beverages (SSB) attract 28% GST plus a 12% cess, while high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) products only attract 12% GST

- While the global average consumption of sugar is 22 kg per person per year, it is 25 kg per year per person in India
- Free sugar consumption in India is five times the WHO recommended threshold
- For SSBs, a health tax of 10-30% could result in 7-30% decline in demand
- For HFSS, 10-30% health tax could result in 5-24% decline in demand
- If sugar costs ₹100 base price, with current GST at 18% it costs ₹118. With a proposed additional tax increase of 10-30%, estimated price to consumers will be ₹128-148

Precedent: Up to 70 countries have imposed a health tax on SSBs and HFSS products.

- For SSBs with a ₹100 base price, current GST at 18% plus 12% additional cess, the price to consumers is ₹140. This will increase to ₹150-170 with a proposed additional tax of 10-30%
- For HFSS products with a ₹100 base price and GST at 12%, the price to consumers is ₹112. This will increase to ₹122-142 with additional tax of 10-30%

- ❖ **Niti Aayog's Interest:**
  - ☞ The Niti Aayog has expressed interest in understanding the potential **impact of health taxes** and **warning labels on food products**.
  - ☞ The objective is to **encourage healthier eating practices** among Indian consumers.

ABOUT SSBS & HFSS
- ❖ **Definition:**
  - ☞ As per the *Ministry of Women and Child Development,* encompass any food or **beverage, whether packaged or non-packaged,** characterized by low levels of essential nutrients such as **proteins, vitamins, phytochemicals, minerals, and dietary fiber.**
  - ☞ These items are notably a**bundant in fat, particularly saturated fatty acids, salt, and sugar,** contributing to a **high energy content (calories).**

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY:
- ❖ **Target Audience for Health Tax:**
  - ☞ The proposed health tax primarily **targets bulk consumers, such as confectionery and sweet manufacturers.**
  - ☞ Ordinary households **purchasing regular sugar** for personal use are not recommended for taxation.
- ❖ **Confectionery Industry Significance**:
  - ☞ Confectionery manufacturers **contribute up to 55% to the annual sugar** production in India.
  - ☞ Taxing this industry is anticipated to **reduce demand as increased costs** are likely to be passed on to consumers.
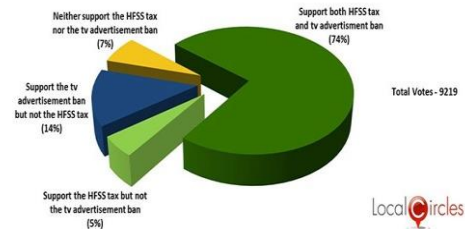
- ❖ **Price Elasticity Analysis:**
  - ☞ **'Price Elasticity'** was employed by researchers to gauge the impact of the health tax.
  - ☞ A **10% price increase in sugar may result in a 2% reduction in demand**.
  - ☞ The elasticity for **confectionery indicates a 13-18% decrease** in demand with an additional **30% tax on top of the existing 18% GST.**

79% citizens in favor of tax on high fat, sugar and salty foods

India's food regulator FSSAI is proposing a new tax on all packaged foods with high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) content and ban on advertising them on child television channels. Do you support these moves?

Neither support the HFSS tax nor the tv advertisement ban (7%)

Support both HFSS tax and tv advertisement ban (74%)

Support the tv advertisement ban but not the HFSS tax (14%)

Support the HFSS tax but not the tv advertisement ban (5%)

Total Votes - 9219

LocalCircles

IMPACT ON SSBS AND HFSS PRODUCTS:
- ❖ **Recommended Tax Rates**:
  - ☞ A **health tax of 10-30%** is suggested for **sugar-sweetened beverages** (SSBs) and **HFSS products.**
  - ☞ This could **lead to a 7-30% decline in demand for SSBs** and a **5-24% decline for HFSS products.**
- ❖ **Revenue Generation:**
  - ☞ Additional taxes are estimated **to boost government revenues by 12-200% under different scenarios.**
  - ☞ The study proposes directing these **revenues toward public health programs to address issues** like obesity, **tooth decay, and non-communicable diseases in India.**
- ❖ **Global Context:**
  - ☞ **Approximately 70 countries**, including **Mexico, Chile, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, and South Africa**, have already implemented health taxes on sugar, SSBs, and HFSS products.
  - ☞ Positive effects include **reduced consumption of taxed beverages** and **improved health indicators** in certain countries**.**

Color Variation in Frogs and Toads

WHY IN NEWS?
- ❖ *Study involving over 3,000 species of frogs and toads suggests that **their color variations play a crucial role in protecting them** against environmental stress and pathogens.*
- ❖ *The research indicates that the **color of these amphibians** may impact their **ability to survive in a changing climate**.*

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FROG AND TOAD
- ❖ **Hind Legs and Skin:**
  - ☞ *Frogs:* Silky skin and **longer legs**.
  - ☞ *Toads:* **Warty, drier skin** with heavyset bodies and shorter legs.
- ❖ **Scientific Order:**
  - ☞ *Frogs:* Belong to the **family Ranidae (about 400 species)**.
  - ☞ *Toads:* Belong to the **family Bufonidae (more than 300 species).**
- ❖ **Legs and Locomotion:**
  - ☞ *Frogs:* Long legs for **hopping.**

- ☞ *Toads:* Shorter legs for **walking.**
- ❖ **Skin Characteristics**:
  - ☞ *Frogs:* **Smooth, moist skin** with pads on **toes for climbing**.
  - ☞ *Toads:* Dry skin covered in "**warts**" and parotoid glands that secrete poison for defense.
- ❖ **Egg-Laying Differences:**
  - ☞ *Frogs:* Lay eggs in a **cluster resembling a bunch of grapes.**
  - ☞ *Toads:* Lay eggs in **long strands**.
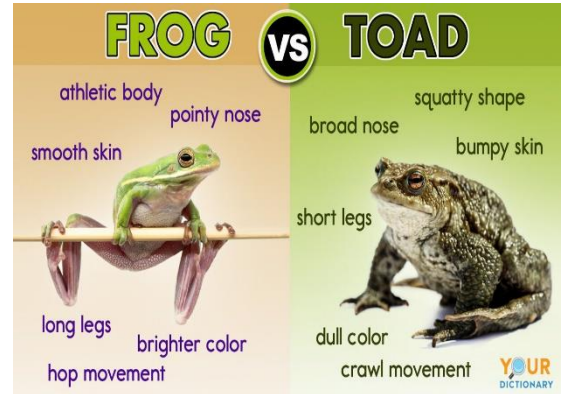- ❖ **Defensive Strategies:**
  - ☞ *Bright Colors:* Signal **toxic skin to deter predators**.
  - ☞ *Camouflage:* **Mottled green or brown colors** for hiding.
- ❖ **Adaptive Behaviors:**
  - ☞ *Oriental Fire-Bellied Toad:* Exhibits both **dull green camouflage** and reveals a **toxic red belly when disturbed**.
  - ☞ *Threat Response:* Toads can puff up **to appear larger and unappealing to predators.**

RECENT FINDINGS
- ❖ **Heat Tolerance vs. Vulnerability:**
  - ☞ Lighter-colored frogs and toads were found to **have higher heat tolerance.**
  - ☞ However, this comes at the **cost of increased vulnerability** to pathogens and **UVB radiation**.
- ❖ **Tropical Importance:**
  - ☞ The study emphasizes that in **tropical regions, where temperatures are generally higher,** resistance to pathogens becomes **more critical for the survival of these amphibians.**
- ❖ **Environmental Adaptations:**
  - ☞ The findings suggest that the **color variations observed in frogs and toads may be linked to their adaptation strategies**, helping them navigate the challenges posed by climate change and environmental stress.

PIDF Scheme

WHY IN NEWS?
- ❖ *The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the **Payments Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) Scheme** by two years until December 2025.*
- ❖ *The scope of the PIDF scheme has been **broadened to include subsidy provisions for sound box** instruments and **Aadhaar-enabled biometric devices.***
- ❖ *As of November 30, 2023, the PIDF scheme **holds a corpus of Rs 1,026.37 crore.***

OBJECTIVE AND OPERATIONALIZATION
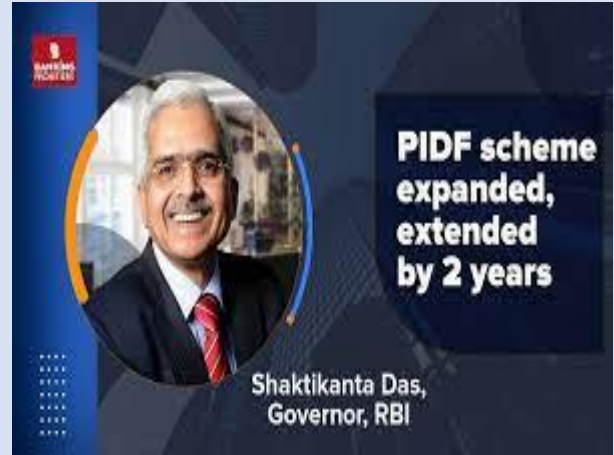- ❖ **Original Objective:**

- **Launched in January 2021** for a **three-year period**, the PIDF scheme aimed to **encourage the deployment of payment acceptance infrastructure in tier-3 to tier-6 centres**, North Eastern states, and Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
- ❖ **Encouraging Infrastructure:**
  - The scheme specifically targets the **deployment of physical Point of Sale (PoS) terminals, Quick Response (QR) codes,** and other payment acceptance infrastructure.

PIDF scheme expanded, extended by 2 years

Shaktikanta Das, Governor, RBI

KEY CHANGES AND INCLUSIONS

- ❖ **Extension Period:**
  - The RBI has decided to extend the PIDF scheme for **an additional two years, now valid until December 31, 2025.**
- ❖ **Scope Widening:**
  - Eligibility criteria for **subsidy beneficiaries now include persons under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme** in all centres.
- ❖ **New Eligible Devices:**
  - **Sound box devices and Aadhaar-enabled biometric devices** are now eligible for subsidy claims under the PIDF scheme.
- ❖ **Uniform Subsidies:**
  - Special focus areas, such as **North Eastern states and UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh,** now **receive uniform subsidies at 90%** of the device cost.

DEPLOYMENT STATISTICS

- ❖ **Total Devices Deployed:**
  - As of end-November 2023, the PIDF scheme has facilitated the **deployment of 8,27,901 physical devices and 2,71,95,902 digital devices.**
- ❖ **Physical Devices:**
  - Include **PoS terminals, mobile PoS (mPoS), GPRS, and PSTN.**
- ❖ **Digital Devices:**
  - **Encompass inter-operable QR code**-based payments like **UPI QR and Bharat QR.**

National Transit Pass System (NTPS)-'One Nation-One

WHY IN NEWS?
*The central government launched the **National Transit Pass System (NTPS)** to facilitate seamless **transit of forest goods** across the **country through a single permit**.*

ABOUT NTPS
- ❖ **Objective:**

Pass'	

☞ Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav **launches NTPS to facilitate seamless transit of timber, bamboo**, and other forest produce across India.

❖ **Streamlining Transit:**

☞ NTPS envisions a "**One Nation-One Pass" regime**, replacing state-**specific rules for timber transit permits**, enhancing ease of doing business.

❖ **Online Mode:**

☞ Unified, **online mode for tree growers and farmers** involved in agroforestry across the country to streamline timber transit permits.

LAUNCH EVENT AND SIGNIFICANCE

❖ **Pan-India Launch:**

☞ NTPS is launched p**an-India to create a unified and streamlined process for the transit of forest produce.**

❖ **Awareness Drive:**

☞ Special Pan Indian vehicles carrying forest produce were **flagged-off to create awareness about NTPS's applicability** and ease of use.

❖ **QR Coded Transit Permits:**

☞ Permits generated **under NTPS feature QR codes** for validity verification at check gates, ensuring seamless transit.

IMPACT AND VISION

❖ **Historic Achievement:**

☞ Shri Bhupender Yadav marks the nationwide implementation of NTPS as a historic achievement.

❖ **Transparency Guarantee**:

☞ Aligns with PM Narendra Modi's vision for **greater transparency and guarantees for India's development.**

❖ **Beyond Agroforestry**:

☞ Extends **impact beyond agroforestry, incentivizing** the entire value chain associated with timber and forest products.

CURRENT ADOPTION

❖ **States and UTs Embracing NTPS:**

☞ **Presently, 25 States and Union Territories have embraced the unified permit system**, providing a significant **boost to the agroforestry sector**.

National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India (NCDFI)

WHY IN NEWS?

❖ *Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah laid the foundation stone of the headquarters of National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India (NCDFI) Limited in Gandhinagar.*

ABOUT NATIONAL COOPERATIVE DAIRY FEDERATION OF INDIA (NCDFI)

❖ **Establishment:**
  - ☛ **Registered on December 07, 1970,** under the **Bombay Cooperative Societies Act (VII of 1925)** in the Union Territory of Delhi.
  - ☛ Headquartered in **New Delhi initially**.

❖ **Commencement:**
  - ☛ Began functioning as the **apex body of the cooperative dairy industry in 1984.**
  - ☛ Shifted its **headquarters to Anand,** the milk capital of India, in December 1986.
  - ☛ A**mended its bye-laws in April 1987** to come under the Multi State Cooperative Societies Act.

❖ **Membership:**
  - ☛ **19 Regular Members, 13 Associate Members**, and the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) as its Institutional Member.

OBJECTIVES:

❖ **Industry Promotion**:
  - ☛ **Promote dairy, oilseeds, vegetable/edible oil**, and vanaspati industries on cooperative principles.

❖ **Coordination and Development:**
  - ☛ Coordinate, **assist, develop, and facilitate the working of dairy** and oilseeds grower cooperatives and affiliated organizations.

NCDFI'S ROLE AND FUTURE STEPS

❖ **Headquarters Expansion:**
  - ☛ New Gandhinagar HQ guides cooperative **dairies, symbolizing White Revolution's growth.**

❖ **Organic Farming**:
  - ☛ Emphasizes **NCDFI's role in promoting organic farming**, aligning with national and global goals.

❖ **Seed Cooperative:**
  - ☛ Forms seed cooperative for **seed conservation and promotion**.

❖ **E-Auction Platforms:**
  - ☛ **Introduction of e-auction platforms for pulses**, enhancing procurement efficiency.

❖ **Ethanol and Agriculture:**
  - ☛ PM's global **ethanol alliance and policies for maize-based ethanol**, promoting self-reliance.