



**TATHASTU**  
Institute of Civil Services

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS



**15<sup>th</sup> February, 2024**

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S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	LEGALLY GAURANTEED MSP
2.	ADJOURNMENT LETTERS WILL NO LONGER BE PERMISSIBLE: SC
3.	PRELIMS POINTERS

## LEGALLY GAURANTEED MSP

**SOURCE:** [THE INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

**TAG:** GS Paper III- *Agriculture Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices.*

### **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

#### **Mains**

**Q. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing MSP guarantees through legislation and propose alternative policy recommendations to ensure income stability for farmers.**

**(150 words)**

#### **WHY IN NEWS?**

- ❖ *Farmers marching to the national capital seek legal assurance for **minimum support price (MSP) on various crops.***
- ❖ *However, guaranteeing MSP through legislation is viewed as impractical due to operational hurdles.*
- ❖ *Government can only enforce MSP on crops it procures, facing limitations in procuring entire farmer produce or enforcing MSP in private trade.*

#### **CURRENT FARMER PROTESTS IN PUNJAB:**

- ❖ Thousands of farmers from Punjab have gathered at border points with Haryana, attempting to march to Delhi.
- ❖ Their demands include a **legally guaranteed Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops, debt waiver, cancellation of international agreements impacting agriculture, and a minimum pension of ₹5,000 for farmers and agriculture labor.**
- ❖ These demands were previously raised during the 2021-22 protests, which ended after the central government withdrew three controversial agricultural reform laws.
- ❖ The current protest is led by the **SKM (non-political)**, a splinter group of the organization that led the earlier protest, indicating divisions within interest groups across Haryana, Punjab, western U.P., and Rajasthan.



#### **OTHER STRANDS OF PROTEST:**

- ❖ Farmers in western U.P. affected by the Jewar airport project and Yamuna Expressway are also protesting.
- ❖ In Haryana's Sonapat, farmers are protesting **against land acquisition for power cables.**
- ❖ The original SKM and several trade unions have called for a **national rural and industrial strike** on February 16, with demands including the repeal of four labor codes.



## PROS OF GUARANTEEING MSP:

### ❖ Income Stability:

- MSP guarantees provide farmers with a stable source of income, **shielding them from price volatility and market uncertainties.**
- For example, the MSP for wheat in the Rabi Marketing Season 2024-25 is set at Rs 2,275 per quintal, ensuring a minimum price for farmers.

### ❖ Agricultural Growth:

- By assuring minimum prices for crops, MSPs incentivize farmers to **invest in agricultural inputs and technology**, leading to increased productivity and overall growth in the agricultural sector.
- **Punjab and Madhya Pradesh** contribute significantly to wheat production, with Punjab having the highest projected yield per hectare.

### ❖ Social Welfare:

- MSPs contribute to social welfare by uplifting farmers' livelihoods, reducing rural poverty, and improving **living standards in agrarian communities.**
- The current farmer protests in Punjab revolve around **demands for legal assurance of MSP, debt waiver, and other agrarian reforms.**

### ❖ Food Security:

- MSP-based procurement ensures an **adequate supply of essential food grains**, contributing to national food security and mitigating the risk of food shortages during times of scarcity.
- Meaningful procurement primarily occurs for **wheat and rice**, ensuring food security for millions of Indians.

### ❖ Increase in Farmer Income & Rural Development:

- MSPs support rural development by stimulating economic activity in rural areas, creating employment opportunities, and **fostering inclusive growth.**
- **CRISIL Market Intelligence & Analytics suggests that guaranteeing Minimum Support Price (MSP) across crops would benefit farm incomes and stimulate consumption demand.**
- The estimated "**real cost**" of such a guarantee is **approximately ₹21,000 crore**, based on Marketing Year (MY) 2023 trends of 16 out of 23 crops for which MSPs are announced, representing over 90% of India's farm output.
- While MSP-based procurement currently occurs in only a few states, the **benefits of a guarantee would extend to other regions as well.**



### HOW ARE MSPs DETERMINED?

The Centre fixes MSPs for every kharif and rabi cropping season based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)

● When a farmer grows a crop, he incurs costs, some of it explicit and some implicit or unpaid. The CACP considers the following costs:

1

A2

Covers all cash and in kind expenses incurred by farmers on seeds, fertilisers, chemicals, hired labour, fuel, irrigation, etc

2

A2+FL

Actual costs plus an imputed value of unpaid family labour



3

C2

Includes 'A2+FL' along with revenues forgone on owned land (rent) and fixed capital assets (interest)

## CONS OF GUARANTEEING MSP:

### ❖ Market Distortions:

- MSP guarantees can distort **market dynamics by artificially inflating prices**, leading to inefficiencies in resource allocation and misallocation of resources.
- This may disrupt market mechanisms and **create surpluses or shortages in certain commodities.**

### ❖ Budgetary Constraints:

- Implementing MSP guarantees imposes financial burdens on the government, potentially straining fiscal resources and diverting funds from other priority sectors.



- ☛ The "real cost" of guaranteeing MSP is estimated at around Rs 21,000 crore, which may strain government finances.

❖ **Inefficiencies in Procurement:**

- ☛ MSP-based procurement systems often suffer from operational inefficiencies, including **delays in payments, corruption, and bureaucratic hurdles**, undermining the intended benefits for farmers.
- ☛ Farmers may face challenges in accessing MSP benefits due to bureaucratic red tape.

❖ **Impact on Price Stability:**

- ☛ Guaranteeing MSPs for all crops may exacerbate price instability by disrupting market mechanisms and creating surpluses or shortages in certain commodities.
- ☛ This could lead to **price fluctuations and market uncertainties**, affecting both farmers and consumers.

❖ **Dependency Syndrome:**

- ☛ **Over-reliance on MSPs** may foster a dependency syndrome among farmers, discouraging them from adopting modern farming practices, diversifying crops, or exploring alternative income sources.
- ☛ Farmers may become overly reliant on government support, hindering **their long-term economic sustainability**.

**PROJECTED YIELD AND COST OF PRODUCTION\***

State	Projected yield (qtl/ha)	Cost of production (₹/quintal)		Return (%) as against MSP of ₹2,275 per quintal	
		A2+FL	C2	over A2+FL (%)	over C2 (%)
Madhya Pradesh	39.14	1,064	1,478	113.82	53.92
Punjab	49.45	832	1,503	173.44	51.36
Rajasthan	40.96	1,186	1,597	91.82	42.45
Haryana	48.02	988	1,611	130.26	41.22
Uttar Pradesh	37.73	1,198	1,736	89.9	31.05
Bihar	29.52	1,226	1,745	85.56	30.37
Gujarat	33.32	1,378	1,766	65.09	28.82
Chhattisgarh	23.26	1,496	1,939	52.07	17.33
West Bengal	29.64	1,567	2,003	45.18	13.58
Jharkhand	21.78	1,628	2,160	39.74	5.32
Himachal Pradesh	22.01	1,738	2,364	30.9	-3.76
Maharashtra	25.47	2,195	2,735	3.64	-16.82
<b>All India</b>	<b>38.89</b>	<b>1,128</b>	<b>1,652</b>	<b>101.68</b>	<b>37.71</b>

\* A2+FL & C2 of wheat for RMS 2024-25; C2: projected cost of production; A2+FL: Paid out cost plus imputed value of family labour; Source: Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices

**SUGGESTED SOLUTION & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

❖ **Minimum Support Income:**

- ☛ Instead of MSP, focus should shift towards **minimum income support (MIS)** for farmers, provided through **direct benefit transfers** per-acre or per-farmer.
- ☛ MIS enables farmers to make informed market-driven decisions and **encourages crop diversification, essential for sustainable agriculture**.
- ☛ Current MSP regime incentivizes overproduction of **certain crops like wheat, rice, and sugarcane, hindering diversification efforts**.

❖ **Constructive Dialogue:**

- ☛ Government should engage in constructive dialogue with protesting farmers, avoiding confrontational measures, and **learning from past experiences**.
- ☛ Overreaction and stigmatization of protestors as anti-national or criminals are counterproductive, hindering resolution of farmers' grievances.



## ADJOURNMENT LETTERS WILL NO LONGER BE PERMISSIBLE: SC

**SOURCE:** [THE HINDU](#)

**TAG:** GS Paper II- **Judgements & Cases Judiciary, Indian Constitution, Parliament, Executive, Transparency & Accountability**

### ***Mains Practice Question:***

**Q. Discuss the discretionary power of the court regarding adjournments in judicial proceedings, highlighting the legal provisions, purpose, and procedure for seeking adjournments. (250 Words)**

**Q. Evaluate the significance of adjournments in ensuring fairness and equity in legal proceedings. (150 Words)**

### WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ Recently, in a **circular issued by the Supreme Court on Wednesday 14th Feb, 2024**, it has been stated that **the court will no longer consider requests for adjournment from lawyers in bail and anticipatory bail cases** if notice had been previously issued by the court.

### WHAT IS ADJOURNMENTS IN JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS?

- ❖ **Definition of Adjournment:**
  - Adjournment, as mentioned in procedural law, **refers to the rescheduling or postponing of a case for a later date or time, providing parties involved with additional time to address the matter at hand.**
  - **Letters of adjournment are last-minute requests by parties for postponement of cases listed before a Bench of the court.**
  - **The letters are filed in the Registry and circulated to the opposing parties.** The case, when called for hearing in the day, is usually adjourned if all the parties agree. Usually, they do as a matter of professional courtesy.
- ❖ **Types of Postponement: Postponement involves delaying a case either for a specified day or an indefinite period.** When a delay is indefinite, it is termed as "sine die," meaning without a definite time for continuation, signifying the official conclusion of the regular session or suspension of a specific trial.
- ❖ **Discretionary Power of the Court:**
  - **The court holds discretionary power regarding adjournment, granting time to either party involved if there exists sufficient cause.**
  - However, the court's discretion in granting adjournment is permissive, lacking specific rules or guidelines for determining its validity.
- ❖ **Legal Provisions:**
  - **Provisions regarding adjournment are outlined in Order XVII of the Civil Procedure Act 1908, although the term "adjournment" is not explicitly defined within the Act.**
- ❖ **Purpose of Adjournment:**
  - **Adjournment is permitted only when there are specific and valid reasons, crucial for ensuring justice.** The court cannot make decisions without being completely satisfied with the circumstances.
- ❖ **Ensuring Justice:**
  - Despite potential frustration caused by delays in proceedings, adjournments are necessary to ensure fairness and provide all parties with sufficient opportunity to address the matter effectively.
- ❖ **Procedure for Adjournment:**



- Order XVII of the Civil Procedure Code delineates the circumstances under which adjournment may be sought and the procedures to be followed by the court during such delays.
- Rule 1 of the Order grants the court the authority to adjourn a case if it deems the reason provided by the parties to be completely sufficient.

## AN ADJOURNMENT REQUEST CAN BE EITHER APPROVED OR REJECTED BASED ON CERTAIN CRITERIA:

- ❖ **Magistrate's Discretion:**
  - A magistrate or officers' court holds the authority to postpone proceedings at any time.
  - However, this decision must be made with due consideration to the principles of fairness and equity.
- ❖ **Consideration of Equity:**
  - When evaluating an application for adjournment, the court must consider the interests of fairness and equity.
  - There cannot be rigid criteria for either accepting or rejecting adjournment requests.
- ❖ **Grounds for Approval:**
  - Adjournment may be approved if common procedures are ongoing and there is a risk of bias. It ensures that the case is not unfairly dismissed due to ongoing procedures.
- ❖ **Request for Intermission:**
  - If a key witness refuses to comply with the adjournment request, the party seeking adjournment can request an intermission and submit a request for an eyewitness summons.
  - This ensures that essential witnesses are present for the proceedings.
- ❖ **Commitment to Return:**
  - The party seeking adjournment should be able to demonstrate that the witness or any involved party has committed to returning for future proceedings, ensuring that the adjournment is not sought without valid reason.

## WHAT SC CIRUCLAR SAYS:

- ❖ Adjournment letters will not be entertained in cases where exemption from surrendering has been granted, where an interim order is already in operation, or in matters seeking suspension of sentence. **The court will decide on adjournment requests at its discretion.**
- ❖ In cases not falling under the aforementioned categories, **adjournment requests can be circulated until a day before the publication of the main list of cases.** The request must specify the reason for adjournment and the number of previous postponements in the case.
- ❖ **Limitations on Adjournment Requests: Parties or counsel can only circulate an adjournment letter once per case, and consecutive adjournments will not be permitted,** regardless of the requesting party.
- ❖ **Timeline for Adjourned Cases:** If a case is adjourned, it must be listed within four weeks, and the specific hearing date will be provided to the parties. No oral mentioning will be allowed to advance the date.
- ❖ **Restrictions on Fresh Cases:** Adjournment letters will not be accepted for fresh cases or regular hearing matters.

## POSITIVE IMPACTS:

- ❖ **Streamlining Legal Proceedings:**
  - By restricting adjournment requests in specific categories of cases, the court aims to streamline legal proceedings and reduce unnecessary delays.
  - This could lead to a more efficient and timely dispensation of justice.
- ❖ **Enhanced Accountability:**
  - Limiting the number of adjournment requests and disallowing consecutive adjournments can promote accountability among parties and counsel.



- It encourages them to be more prepared and organized for court proceedings.

❖ **Judicial Discretion:**

- Granting the court discretion to decide on adjournment requests allows for a case-by-case assessment of the necessity for postponement.
- This ensures that adjournments are granted only when justified, preserving the integrity of the judicial process.

❖ **Timely Resolution:**

- Requiring adjourned cases to be listed within four weeks and providing specific hearing dates to parties facilitates timely resolution of legal matters.
- This prevents cases from languishing in the court system for extended periods.

❖ **Transparency and Fairness:**

- Requiring specific reasons for adjournment requests and limiting the use of adjournment letters promotes transparency and fairness in the adjudication process.
- It ensures that adjournments are sought for valid reasons and not for frivolous purposes.

❖ **Professional Development:**

- Encouraging parties to appear in court and present their cases without relying excessively on adjournments can contribute to the professional development of legal practitioners.
- It fosters a culture of preparedness and efficiency in legal representation.

❖ **Standard Operating Procedure:**

- The formation of a committee to prepare a standard operating procedure (SoP) on adjournments reflects a commitment to addressing concerns raised by legal associations and promoting consistency and fairness in adjournment practices.

**CONCLUSION:**

*The circular issued by the Supreme Court regarding adjournment requests marks a significant step towards streamlining legal proceedings and promoting efficiency, accountability, and fairness in the administration of justice. By restricting adjournment requests in specific categories of cases, granting judicial discretion, and imposing limits on the use of adjournment letters, the court aims to ensure timely resolution of legal matters while maintaining transparency and integrity in the adjudication process.*



TOPIC	DESCRIPTION
<b>AHIDF SCHEME</b>	<p><b>WHY IN NEWS?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry &amp; Dairying, Shri Parshottam Rupala launched the <b>realigned AHIDF Scheme</b> and released a <b>Radio Jingle on AHIDF in New Delhi.</b></i></li> </ul> <p><b>ANIMAL HUSBANDRY INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND (AHIDF):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ <i>Central Sector Scheme launched by the Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, and Dairying.</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Aim: Facilitate incentivization of investments in:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ <b>Dairy processing</b> and value addition infrastructure</li> <li>☛ <b>Meat processing</b> and value addition infrastructure</li> <li>☛ <b>Animal Feed Plant.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>REALIGNED OF AHIDF SCHEME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Realignment Approval:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Cabinet approved the realignment of the AHIDF under Infrastructure Development Fund with an outlay of ₹29,610 crore, replacing the earlier ₹15,000 crore.</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ <b>Implementation Period:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ The realigned scheme will be implemented for an additional three years from 31.03.2023 till 2025-26.</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ <b>Incorporation of DIDF:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ The Dairy Infrastructure Development Fund has been subsumed into the realigned scheme.</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ <b>Enhanced Benefits:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Dairy Cooperatives will now <b>receive 3% interest subvention under AHIDF, up from 2.5% under DIDF.</b></li> <li>☛ They will also <b>have access to Credit Guarantee support</b> under the <b>Credit Guarantee Fund of AHIDF.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ <b>Purpose:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ The <b>scheme aims to help Dairy Cooperatives</b> upgrade their <b>processing infrastructure with updated technology</b>, benefiting a large number of milk producers in the country.</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Industry associations, <b>NDDB, Dairy Cooperatives, FPO</b>, and officials from the North Eastern States attended the inaugural event.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>BENEFITS UNDER REALIGNED SCHEME:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Interest Subvention of 3%</b> payable up to <b>8 years</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Eligible entities:</b> Individuals, FPO, Dairy Cooperatives, Private Companies, Section 8 companies, MSMEs</li> <li>❖ <b>Credit guarantee cover up to 25%</b> of the term loan</li> <li>❖ No ceiling on the loan amount</li> <li>❖ <b>Loan up to 90%</b> of the estimated/actual project cost</li> <li>❖ Dovetailing with <b>capital subsidy schemes</b> of other ministries or state-level schemes.</li> </ul>







## DIGITAL INDIA FUTURESKILLS SUMMIT

### WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *The **Digital India futureSKILLS Summit** aims to foster future-ready talent, exploring digitization's impact and strategic collaborations. Set for **February 15**, it aligns with PM Modi's vision for India's global talent leadership.*

### DIGITAL INDIA FUTURE SKILLS SUMMIT

- ❖ **Inauguration:**
  - ☛ MeitY and NIELIT are hosting the inaugural Future Skills Summit in Guwahati on February 15, 2024.
  - ☛ It will be inaugurated by Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar.
- ❖ **Focus Areas:**
  - ☛ Focus on the **impact of rapid digitization** and **opportunities in AI, ML, Semiconductors, Robotics, and Cybersecurity** for young Indians.
- ❖ **Objectives:**
  - ☛ Chart a roadmap aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to position India as a global talent hub.
  - ☛ **Foster partnerships between industry and academic institutions** to align educational curricula with industry demands.
- ❖ **Strategic Collaborations:**
  - ☛ Over 20 collaborations between **NIELIT and industry leaders like Intel, HCL, Microsoft, etc.**, to ensure educational curricula meet industry standards.



## ISRO IS SET TO LAUNCH THE INSAT-3DS SATELLITE

### WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** is gearing up to launch the **INSAT-3DS satellite** on February 17, which **promises to revolutionize weather forecasting in India** with its **advanced capabilities**.*

### ABOUT INSAT-3DS

- ❖ **Continuation:**
  - ☛ **INSAT-3DS** is part of the **Third Generation Meteorological Satellite series**, operating from geostationary orbit.
- ❖ **Improved Data:**
  - ☛ Provides better satellite data and **high-resolution Earth images** for tracking extreme climate events.
- ❖ **Key Features:**
  - ☛ **Weighing 2,274kgs**, funded by **Ministry of Earth Sciences**, enabling development of **new satellite products for tracking natural disasters**.
- ❖ **Enhanced Observations:**
  - ☛ Further **observations of atmosphere, land, and oceans**, leading to improved meteorological services.
- ❖ **Payloads:**





**SUPREME COURT STRIKES DOWN ELECTORAL BONDS SCHEME**

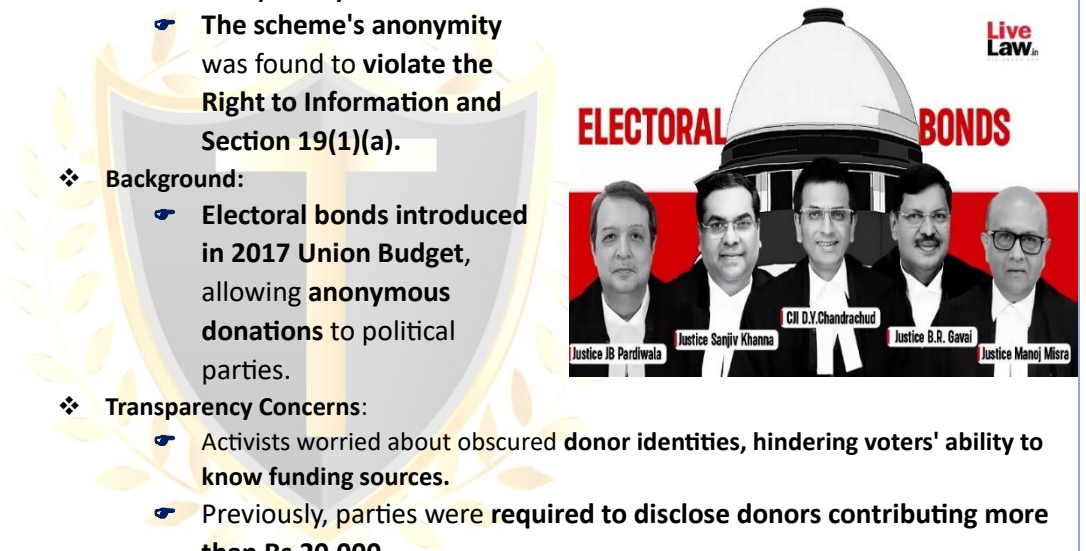
- ☛ Includes an **Imager, Sounder, Data Relay Transponder, and Satellite-aided Search and Rescue Transponder.**
- ❖ **Imager:**
  - ☛ Generates **Earth images across six wavelength bands**, aiding visualization of atmospheric parameters like water vapor.
- ❖ **Sounder:**
  - ☛ **Provides vertical profiles of atmosphere**, enhancing **accuracy of weather predictions** by offering temperature and humidity data.

**WHY IN NEWS?**

- ❖ *The Supreme Court recently struck down the electoral bonds scheme, ruling it as **unconstitutional**. Concerns were **raised about transparency in political funding** due to **anonymous donations** through electoral bonds.*

**RECENT VERDICT**

- ❖ **Unconstitutional Ruling:**
  - ☛ Supreme Court deemed **electoral bonds scheme unconstitutional**, citing **transparency concerns**.
  - ☛ **The scheme's anonymity** was found to **violate the Right to Information and Section 19(1)(a)**.
- ❖ **Background:**
  - ☛ **Electoral bonds introduced in 2017 Union Budget**, allowing **anonymous donations** to political parties.
- ❖ **Transparency Concerns:**
  - ☛ Activists worried about obscured **donor identities**, **hindering voters' ability to know funding sources**.
  - ☛ Previously, parties were **required to disclose donors contributing more than Rs 20,000**.
- ❖ **Petitioners' Demands:**
  - ☛ **Besides challenging scheme's legality**, petitioners sought to **declare political parties as public offices under RTI Act**.
- ❖ **Judicial Proceedings:**
  - ☛ **Five-judge bench led by Chief Justice Chandrachud** reserved judgment in **November** before delivering recent ruling.



**WORLD GOVERNMENTS SUMMIT 2024**

**WHY IN NEWS?**

- ❖ *Prime Minister Narendra Modi **participated in the World Governments Summit 2024 in Dubai as the Guest of Honour**.*

**WORLD GOVERNMENT SUMMIT**

- ❖ **Mission:**
  - ☛ **Global, neutral, non-profit organization** shaping the future of governments.
- ❖ **Agenda:**



- ☛ Focuses on harnessing innovation and technology to solve universal challenges.
- ❖ Establishment:
  - ☛ Founded in 2013, dedicated to shaping future governments and improving humanity.
- ❖ Collaboration:
  - ☛ Successfully collaborates on an international level to inspire and enable the next generation of governments.



**WORLD GOVERNMENTS SUMMIT 2024 HIGHLIGHTS:**

- ❖ Participation:
  - ☛ PM Modi joined 20 world leaders, including 10 Presidents and 10 Prime Ministers, from over 120 countries.
- ❖ Keynote Address:
  - ☛ Spoke on "Shaping the Future Governments", highlighting India's governance reforms and focus on digital technology for welfare.
- ❖ Priorities:
  - ☛ Stressed on inclusive, tech-smart, clean, transparent, and green governance, with a focus on ease of living and climate change action.
- ❖ Continued Contribution:
  - ☛ Pledged India's commitment to global progress and reform in multilateral institutions as a "Vishwa Bandhu" (Friend of the World).

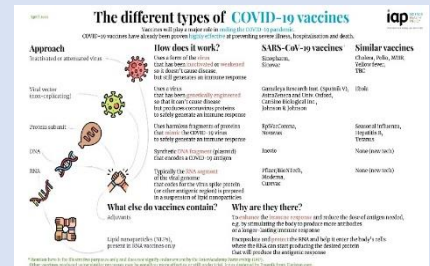
**VACCINE UPDATE AGAINST NEW VARIANTS**

**WHY IN NEWS?**

- ❖ Recently, **COVID-19 vaccines updated** to include antigens from new variants, updated boosters show **varying efficacy, raising concerns.**

**INFLUENZA VACCINE CHALLENGES:**

- ❖ **Biannual updates** needed due to rapid strain mutations.
- ❖ **Imperfect matching** with circulating strains affects effectiveness.
- ❖ Effectiveness diminishes over time.



**SIMILARITIES WITH COVID-19 VACCINES:**

- ❖ Both face challenges with strain variability.
- ❖ Efficacy decreases over time and against highly mutated variants like Omicron.

**BENEFIT OF UPDATING VACCINES:**

- ❖ **Enhanced protection** with improved antibody response against new variants.

**TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES:**

- ❖ **Conventional influenza vaccines** take time to update.
- ❖ **mRNA vaccines offer faster updates** but still require several months.
- ❖ Potential for **updated mRNA vaccines like Gemcovac**, pending national recommendations and virus evolution.

**HORSESHOE CRAB**

**WHY IN NEWS?**

- ❖ **Environmental groups petition the U.S. government** for endangered species protection for the American horseshoe crab.

**HORSESHOE CRABS:**



- ❖ They are **marine arthropods, not true crabs**, and are more **closely related to spiders and scorpions**.
- ❖ They contribute to **coastal ecosystems through their burrowing activities**.
- ❖ They are the **oldest living creatures on Earth**, with ancestors dating back 450 million years.



**THREATS TO HORSESHOE CRABS:**

- ❖ **Commercial baiting:**
  - ☛ Pharmaceutical companies harvest horseshoe crabs for their **blue blood**, containing a **clotting agent used in testing drugs and medical devices**.
- ❖ **Habitat loss:**
  - ☛ Habitat loss from **oceanfront development, pollution, and sea-level**.
- ❖ **Climate Change:**
  - ☛ Mass die-offs have occurred in recent years, with **NOAA ranking their vulnerability to climate change as "very high."**

**POPULATION DECLINE:**

- ❖ **Populations** have declined significantly in recent decades, with spawning numbers down two-thirds since 1990 in the **Delaware Bay estuary**.
- ❖ **Egg densities** have **fallen more than 80%** in the past four decades.

**ECOLOGICAL IMPACT:**

- ❖ Declines in horseshoe crab populations impact other marine species that feed on their larvae and eggs, such as the **rufa red knot, a migratory shorebird**.

**PLACES IN NEWS-  
'MADAGASCAR'**

**WHY IN NEWS?**

- ❖ *PM Modi meets **Madagascar's President at World Governments Summit**, affirming commitment to **bilateral ties and supporting Madagascar's developmental journey**.*

**ABOUT MADAGASCAR**

- ❖ Madagascar is the **world's fourth-largest island country and second-largest island nation after Indonesia**.
- ❖ Its **location off Africa's coast** makes it susceptible to climate anomalies, like an early heatwave experienced this year.
- ❖ The island, known for its biodiversity, lies in the **Indian Ocean east of Tanzania and Mozambique**.
- ❖ **Antananarivo, its capital**, is atop a hill **1,280 meters** above sea level, with landmarks like the **Queen's palace**.
- ❖ **Madagascar has a rich history**, from being **discovered by explorers like Marco Polo** to its **colonization by France**.
- ❖ **Three physiographic zones define its landscape:** the east coast strip, central plateau, and low plateaus/plains in the west.
- ❖ The island's highest peak, **Maromokotro**, stands at **2,876 meters** in the **Tsaratana Massif**.
- ❖ **Important rivers** include **Mananara, Mangoro Sambirano, and Mahajamba**, while notable lakes are **Alaotra and Kinkony**.

