

FARMERS' PROTESTS IN INDIA

What is the Ongoing Farmers' Protest About?

- Farmers' unions under the banner of the **Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM)** and the **Samyukta Kisan Morcha** (non-political) have called the protest that is being coordinated from **Punjab**.
- The two forums gave a call of "**Delhi Chalo**" to remind the Prime Minister of the **promises to farmers two years ago**.
 - During the 2020-21 agitation farmers succeeded in their main goal of forcing the central government to roll back its agricultural reforms agenda.

What are the Demands of the Ongoing Farmers Protest?

- The headline demand in the farmers' **12-point agenda** is for a law to **guarantee MSP for all crops**, and the determination of crop prices in accordance with the **Dr M S Swaminathan Commission's report**.
- **The other demands are:**
 - Full **debt waiver** for farmers and labourers;
 - Implementation of the **Land Acquisition Act of 2013**, with provisions for written consent from farmers before acquisition, and compensation at 4 times the collector rate;
 - **Punishment for the perpetrators of the October 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri killings;**
 - India should withdraw from the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** and freeze all free trade agreements;
 - **Pensions** for farmers and farm labourers;
 - **Compensation** for farmers who died during the Delhi protest, including a job for one family member;
 - 200 (instead of 100) days' employment under **MGNREGA** per year, daily wage of Rs 700, and scheme should be linked with farming;

- **The Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 should be scrapped;**
- **National commission** for spices such as chilli and turmeric; etc.

Issue of Minimum Support Price (MSP) in India:

- **Meaning of MSP:** MSP is a form of **market intervention** (a policy decision not enforceable by law) by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices during bumper production years.
- **Announced by:** The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** (Chaired by the PM of India) on the basis of the recommendations of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACAP)** at the beginning of the sowing season for certain crops.
- **Objectives:**
 - MSPs are a guarantee price for farmer's produce from the Government **to prevent the farmers from distress sales and to procure food grains for public distribution.**
 - **For example,** in case of a market glut due to bumper production, government agencies will buy the entire quantity supplied by farmers at the announced minimum price.
- **Crops covered:**
 - Government announces MSPs for **22** mandated crops and fair and remunerative price (**FRP**) for **sugarcane** (total 23).
 - The mandated crops are **14 crops of the kharif season, 6 rabi crops and two other commercial crops.**

Govt's silence on the legal guarantee to MSP: The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare notified a committee (headed by former agriculture secretary Sanjay Agrawal) to make the MSP more effective and transparent.

- However, the committee's terms of reference **do not include any legal guarantee to MSP**, which was one of the key demands of the farmers protest of 2020-2021.

GROW PORTAL

Recently, the GROW report and portal was launched by a Member of NITI Aayog.



- The "Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW)-Suitability Mapping" portal allows universal access to state and district-level data.
- It is **hosted on the Bhuvan website.**
- The GROW initiative aligns with national commitments, aiming to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.
- The initiative, led by NITI Aayog, involved a collaborative effort from multiple institutions and employed advanced technologies such as remote sensing and GIS to assess agroforestry suitability across all districts in India.
- Utilising thematic datasets, the project resulted in the creation of an **Agroforestry Suitability Index (ASI)**. This index enables national-level prioritisation for greening and restoration projects.
- These parameters were selected as a result of expert consultations and considered to be the most critical layers in identifying areas that are amenable to interventions with agroforestry. Highest weightage was given to **wastelands.**
- The developed system provides information on areas suitable for **agroforestry across India.**
- **The key features of the system:**
 - Generates district-level information on wasteland areas suitable for agroforestry
 - Generates area prioritisation regime i.e. highly suitable area, moderate and less suitable for agroforestry
 - Generates live maps
 - Generates area analysis-statistic report
 - Offer an interactive mode/tool that provides flexibility in handling the weights as per local conditions/need

WHAT IS THE INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA (IBBI)?

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has now mandated that Resolution Professionals (RPs) provide a copy of its report to both creditors and debtors in all cases.



- The IBBI was established on October 1, 2016, in accordance with the provisions of the ‘Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016’.
- It is responsible for the implementation of the IBC. The IBC amends and consolidates the laws relating to the insolvency resolution of individuals, partnership firms, and corporate persons in a time-bound manner.
 - The IBBI regulates professionals as well as processes.
 - It has regulatory oversight over insolvency professional agencies, insolvency professional entities, insolvency professionals, and information utilities.
 - It enforces rules for processes of corporate insolvency resolution, individual insolvency resolution, corporate liquidation, and individual bankruptcy under the IBC.

Constitution of the Board: The Board consists of the following members who are appointed by the Central Government:

- A Chairperson.
- Three members from among the officers of the Central Government equivalent or not below the rank of a Joint Secretary. Out of the three members, each will represent the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and the Ministry of Law, ex-officio.
- One member nominated by the RBI (Reserve Bank of India), ex-officio.
- Five other members are nominated by the Central Government, out of which at least three should be whole-time members.
- The term of office of the Chairperson and members (other than ex-officio members) is five years or until they attain sixty-five years, whichever is earlier, and they are eligible for re-appointment.

WHAT IS RETAIL INFLATION?

India's retail inflation eased to a three-month low of 5.1% recently.



- Retail inflation, also known as Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation, tracks the change in retail prices of goods and services which households purchase for their daily consumption.
- CPI is calculated for a fixed basket of goods and services that may or may not be altered by the government from time to time.
- The change in the price index over a period of time is referred to as CPI-based inflation or retail inflation.
- **What Does the CPI tell?** Following are a few things that the CPI index interprets:
 - **Cost of living**
 - The **purchasing power** of consumers
 - The **expensiveness of different articles** that consumers buy and services that are availed
 - **Value of the Indian rupee**
- **How is CPI calculated?**
 - CPI is **calculated as a percentage**. It is a **comparison of the general price level in the markets in a particular time period from a time frame in the past**. This is **known as the base year**.
 - CPI, therefore, is calculated by referring to a base year, which is a benchmark. **Currently, the base year is 2012**.
 - The **National Statistical Office (NSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**) **compiles All India as well as state-wise CPI for Rural, Urban, and Combined sectors and releases the CPI numbers every month**.

CPI also helps understand the real value of salaries, wages, and pensions, the purchasing power of the nation's currency, and regulating rates.

FLOOR TEST IN THE BIHAR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Why in news?

- Amid the ongoing political shift in Bihar, a floor test was held in the Bihar Legislative Assembly on February 12. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar won the vote.

Floor test

- **About**
 - A floor test is a Constitutional mechanism under which a CM appointed by the Governor (Article 164) can be asked to prove majority on the floor of the Legislative Assembly of the state.
 - A floor test is also called a ‘trust vote’.
 - It is held in legislative bodies, to find out whether the government that is suspected to have lost the majority still retains the confidence of the House.
 - This is done through a vote among the members.
- **Authority to call for a floor test**
 - When the House is in session, it is the Speaker who can call for a floor test.
 - But when the Assembly is not in session, the Governor’s residuary powers under **Article 163** allow him to call for a floor test.

What happens during a floor test?

- **Vote of confidence**
 - If the government's majority is doubted, the leader of the party claiming the majority must ask for a vote of confidence.
 - They have to show they have more support among those who are present and voting.
 - The CM moves a motion seeking a vote of confidence, on which MLAs who are present in the House, vote.
 - If the majority of members vote in favour, the government survives; if the CM loses the vote, the government has to resign.

- This happens both in Parliament and the state Legislative Assemblies.
 - **Voting methods**
 - Voting can be conducted by either a voice vote, in which MLAs respond to the motion verbally.
 - Voting electronically involves the casting of votes by pressing a button, after which the numbers for each side are displayed on a board.
 - In a physical division of votes, lawmakers cast votes in a ballot box, which are then counted.
 - **Composite Floor Test**
 - The Composite Floor Test is conducted only when more than one person stakes a claim to form the government.
 - When the majority is not clear, the governor might call for a special session to see who has the majority.
 - The majority is counted based on those present and voting.
 - Some legislators may be absent or choose not to vote.
 - This can also be done through a voice vote where the member can respond orally or through division voting.
 - In division vote, voting can be done through electronic gadgets, ballots or slips.
 - The person who has the majority will form the government.
 - In case of a tie, the speaker can also cast his vote.
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QATAR FREES 8 EX-INDIAN NAVY MEN JAILED ON ESPIONAGE CHARGES

- Qatar has released eight veterans of the Indian Navy who were sentenced to death on espionage charges.
- Seven of the eight former Indian Navy personnel have now returned to India.
- **Indian migrants in Qatar**
 - Qatar has around 8 lakh Indian migrants, who send remittances back home.

- In FY 2021-22, it sent the eighth-highest amount of remittances among all countries.

Background of the present case

- **Arrest of eight navy personnel**
 - On August 30, 2022, eight former Indian Navy personnel, along with two others, were arrested on undeclared charges.
 - These personnel were working at Al Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services, a defence services provider company.
 - As per different sources, the Indians had been working in their private capacity with the company to oversee the induction of Italian small stealth submarines U2I2.
 - The company's old website, which no longer exists, said it provided training, logistics and maintenance services to the Qatari Emiri Naval Force (QENF).
- **Charges against the men**
 - The officers were jailed on charges that have not been made public.
 - However, as per the media reports, the eight Indians had been charged with spying for Israel.
- **Navy veterans were awarded death penalty**
 - In March 2023, the last of multiple bail pleas filed for the veterans was rejected.
 - The trial began later that month and on October 26, 2023, the death sentence was handed to all eight men.
- **Appeal filed by India**
 - In November 2023, the MEA announced it had filed an appeal and that its legal team had details of the charges.
- **Death sentence commuted**
 - In December 2023, the Court of Appeal of Qatar commuted the death sentence of eight former Indian Navy personnel.

WHAT IS BRUMATION?

Researchers have observed instances of brumation in various reptilian species across habitats.



Brumation is the name to describe a **period of dormancy or slowed activity in reptiles**, much like hibernation in mammals.

- It typically occurs during colder months, when temperatures drop and food becomes scarce.
- During brumation, reptiles may retreat to underground burrows, rock crevices or other sheltered areas where temperatures are relatively more stable.
- Their metabolism slows significantly, allowing them to go weeks or even months without eating.
- This period of reduced activity allows reptiles to **conserve energy** and minimise their resource requirements.
- Such species include box turtles and painted turtles, which burrow into the mud at the bottom of ponds or lakes. Snakes may seek refuge in underground dens or caves while lizards may hide under rocks or within vegetation.

Why brumation?

- Reptiles enter a state of brumation to **conserve energy** and **survive** these adverse environmental conditions.
- Brumation is crucial for reptiles to survive cold climates and endure challenging environmental conditions until they can reemerge to feed and reproduce in more favourable climates.