ADVANCE AUTHORIZATION SCHEME

- It allows **duty free import of inputs,** which are physically **incorporated in an export product.**
- In addition to any inputs, **packaging material, fuel, oil and catalysts** which are consumed/utilized in the process of production of export products, are also allowed.
- The inputs imported are exempt from duties like,
    - **Basic Customs Duty, Additional Customs Duty, Education Cess**, Anti-dumping duty, Safeguard Duty and Transition Product-Specific Safeguard duty, Integrated tax, and Compensation Cess, wherever applicable, subject to certain conditions.
- An **export obligation** is usually **set as a condition** for issuing Advance Authorization.
- **Advanced Authorization Issued to**
    - **Manufacturer Exporters:** Entities engaged in manufacturing goods for export.
    - **Merchant Exporters tied to Supporting Manufacturer**(s): Traders who do not manufacture themselves but procure goods from a supporting manufacturer for export.

  The **Advanced Authorization shall be issued for**
    - Physical exports
    - Intermediate supply
    - Supplies made to specified categories of deemed exports
    - Supply of 'stores' on board of a foreign-going vessel/aircraft, provided that there are specific **Standard Input Output Norms (SION)** in respect of items supplied.
- Advance Authorization **is valid for 12 months** from the date of issue of such Authorization.
- It is overseen by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).**

INDIA'S LABOUR MARKET: GAINS AMID CHALLENGES

India adds 7–10 million young workers to its labour force each year, many of them better educated and with higher aspirations than previous generations.

This creates a major opportunity—but also a challenge—for the economy to generate enough productive jobs, especially for youth and women.

The **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2025 report** shows encouraging improvements in India's labour market, while also highlighting persistent structural issues that must be addressed to fully realise the country's demographic dividend.

Key Challenges in India's Labour Market

- **Weak Education-to-Employment Transition** - Although more young Indians are accessing higher education, job absorption remains inadequate. A significant gap persists between the number of graduates entering the labour market and those actually finding employment.
    - For instance, between 2004 and 2023, roughly 5 million graduates entered the labour market annually, but only about 2.8 million secured employment of any kind.
- **Limited Skill Training** - Formal vocational and technical training remains scarce, with only a small share of the working-age population receiving it. However, those with such training show much higher workforce participation, highlighting the urgent need for skill expansion.
    - Only 4% of individuals aged 15-59 have received formal vocational or technical training.
- **Structural Barriers to Women's Employment** - Despite improving participation, women continue to face constraints due to childcare and household responsibilities. The unequal burden of unpaid domestic work limits their ability to remain consistently engaged in paid employment.

  - Yet among those who have, workforce participation is substantially higher — 83% for men and 51% for women .
- **Persistent Gender Workload Inequality** - Women often work fewer paid hours than men because they shoulder additional unpaid labour at home, reflecting the continuing double burden that restricts their economic participation and earning potential.
  - For instance, urban self-employed men work approximately 17.5 hours more per week than women, and in regular salaried employment, the gap is about 7.9 hours per week.
- **Large NEET Population**
  - NEET stands for "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" and refers to young people (typically aged 15-24 or 15-29) who are economically inactive, jobless, and not enhancing their skills through schooling or vocational training.
  - A sizeable share of young people remain outside education, employment, and training.
  - Since they are excluded from unemployment statistics, the scale of youth disengagement may be larger than headline data suggests.

The Way Forward for India's Labour Market

- While India's labour market is showing positive momentum, sustaining this progress will require focused policy action.
- Key priorities include expanding industry-relevant skill training, promoting women's workforce participation through supportive measures, creating more stable jobs with stronger social protection, and encouraging employment in emerging sectors such as green industries.
- Special interventions like apprenticeship programmes will also be essential to bring NEET youth back into productive economic activity and fully harness India's demographic potential.

SUGAR EXPORT BAN: KEY REASONS

- India is the world's second-largest producer of sugar (after Brazil) and the largest consumer.
- The industry employs millions of farmers and workers, making it one of the most socially significant agro-based industries in the country.
- **Factors Responsible for Location**
    - **Raw Material Availability** — Sugarcane is the primary raw material. Since it is bulky, perishable, and loses sucrose content rapidly after cutting, mills must be located close to cane-growing areas.
    - **Climate** — Sugarcane thrives in tropical and subtropical climates with a long growing season, high rainfall or irrigation, and warm temperatures. This naturally concentrates the industry in fertile plains and coastal regions.
    - **Labour** — The industry is labour-intensive — both in farming and processing.
    - **Transport** — Efficient road and rail networks are essential to bring cane quickly to mills and dispatch sugar to markets. Poor transport directly reduces the quality of extracted sugar.
    - **Water and Power** — Sugar mills consume enormous quantities of water for washing and processing.
- **Geographical Distribution**
    - **North India Belt** — Uttar Pradesh dominates and accounts for the largest number of mills. Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, and Uttarakhand also form part of this belt, spread across the fertile Ganga-Yamuna plain. However, the crushing season here is shorter (November–April) and cane yield per hectare is relatively lower.
    - **South India Belt** — Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh form a highly productive southern belt. The sugarcane grown here has a higher sucrose content, the crushing season is longer, mills are more modern and cooperative-run, and overall efficiency is greater.

India's Sugar Supply Position Remains Comfortable, But Stocks Are Tightening

- India is expected to produce 279 lakh tonnes of sugar in 2025-26. Combined with opening stocks of over 50 lakh tonnes, total availability stands at 329 lakh tonnes.
- The government had initially allowed 15 lakh tonnes of sugar exports, later increasing the quota by 5 lakh tonnes, taking the **total permitted exports to 20 lakh tonnes**.
- However, only about 6.5 lakh tonnes are likely to be exported.
- Although closing stocks would be the **lowest** since 2016-17, still it is sufficient to meet demand until the next crushing season begins around November.

Why the Government Took No Chances on Sugar Exports?

- **El Niño Threat to Future Sugar Production** - The biggest concern is the possible emergence of El Niño, which could weaken monsoon rains and raise temperatures in India. While the current sugar crop is safe, the next planting cycle for 2027-28 could face serious production risks.
- **Fertiliser Supply Risks from West Asia Crisis** - Sugarcane is a water- and fertiliser-intensive crop. Ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia could disrupt fertiliser supplies, increasing the risk of lower sugarcane yields in upcoming seasons.
- **Doubts Over Actual Sugar Stocks** - The government may be uncertain whether all sugar mills actually hold the stock quantities they officially report. Any mismatch between declared and physical stocks could create unexpected supply shortages.
- **Inflation Management as a Priority** - The government wants to avoid any future shortage that could push up sugar prices and worsen broader inflation concerns, especially at a time of uncertainty over fuel, fertiliser, and food prices.
- **Export Economics Already Weak** - Indian sugar exports were already commercially unattractive, as domestic sales offered better returns than exports after accounting for transport and port handling costs. The ban mainly closes an already narrow export window.

BUILDING A PREVENTIVE HEALTH CULTURE IN INDIA

- Over the years, India has established advanced hospitals, produced skilled doctors, and improved access to modern medical treatment.
- Despite these achievements, a major challenge continues to threaten national well-being: the growing neglect of **preventive care**.
- Health is often viewed as something to restore after illness instead of something to protect daily and as a result, India has become more successful at treating diseases than preventing them.
- The need of the hour is a **transformation in public thinking** and true progress can only be achieved when individuals, families, and society collectively prioritise long-term **well-being**, healthy lifestyles, and regular medical awareness.

The Window for Action

- **Importance of Early Adulthood**
    - The age group between thirty and forty years represents a critical stage for health intervention. During this period, people are usually focused on careers, responsibilities, and family life. However, this is also the phase when early **metabolic** and **cardiovascular** risks begin to develop silently.
    - By the age of forty, many individuals are no longer disease-free. Unfortunately, most people ignore routine check-ups because they do not experience visible symptoms.
- **Need for Early Detection**
    - Diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and heart-related conditions progress gradually and remain unnoticed for years.
    - By the time warning signs appear, the body may already have suffered serious damage. Therefore, early detection, regular screening, and timely medical intervention are essential. Routine health checks can identify risks before they become life-threatening.

Push for Transformation

- **The Need for Self-Stewardship**
  - Prevention should not remain limited to government programmes or temporary campaigns. It must become a lasting **philosophy of life.**
  - Personal health choices affect not only individuals themselves but also their families, communities, and future generations.
- **Building Healthy Habits**
  - The real challenge lies in changing habits and attitudes.
  - Society must encourage:
    - Regular health check-ups, Balanced nutrition,
    - Physical fitness, Mental well-being,
    - Awareness about chronic diseases
- **Role of Families and Society**
  - Real transformation begins at home. Families shape food habits, routines, and attitudes toward health from an early age.
  - Everyday decisions regarding exercise, diet, sleep, and stress management play a crucial role in long-term wellness.
  - Preventive care becomes both a personal and collective responsibility. A healthier society can only emerge when awareness becomes part of everyday life.

Conclusion

- While the nation has achieved remarkable success in **medical treatment** and innovation, its long-term future depends on strengthening the culture of **prevention**, awareness, and healthy living.
- The fight against chronic disease requires more than hospitals and medicines. It demands discipline, responsibility, and social transformation.
- India's ambitions for sustainable development and global leadership can only succeed when its people remain healthy, productive, and aware.

AGARWOOD

- It is a species of tree belonging to the **Thymelaeaceae family.**
- It is also known as **Oud, Gaharu or Agar**
- The Aquilaria tree is a **fast-growing, subtropical forest tree.**
- **Soil:** Aquilaria can grow on a wide range of soils, including poor sandy soil.
- **Distribution:** It is mainly found in **South Asia's Himalayan foothills**, **throughout Southeast Asia,** and into the rainforests of **Papua New Guinea.**
    - **In India,** it grows in the wild in the Northeast, especially **in Assam, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur.**
- **Applications of Agarwood:** It is one of the world's **most valuable aromatic raw materials** and is widely used in luxury perfumes, incense, cosmetics and traditional products across the Gulf, Europe, and Southeast Asia.
- **Conservation Status:**
    - **IUCN:** Critically Endangered. **CITES:** Appendix II

GINGER

- It is an **herbaceous perennial** plant of the family **Zingiberaceae.**
    - **Climate:** It requires a warm and humid climate (up to an altitude of 1500m).
    - **Temperature:** The crop performs well in a temperature range of **19°C- 28°C**.
    - **Rainfall:** It requires moderate to **high rainfall of about 1,500–2,500 mm** per year or reliable irrigation. Ginger **does not tolerate frost or prolonged drought**.
    - **Soil:** It requires loose, fertile, **well-drained loam or sandy-loam soils** rich in organic matter.
- **Largest Producer**: India is the largest producer of ginger and mainly in **Kerala**, **Orissa, Meghalaya**, West Bengal, and Arunachal Pradesh.

- **Uses:** It is most widely used spice both for **flavouring and for medicinal purpose**. It is used in food preparations, confectionary, beverages, making ginger candy/ preserves.
- **Significance:** It contains a vast amount of **antioxidant compounds** which can be used to treat various **inflammatory conditions.**
- Ginger supplementation significantly **reduces the levels of fasting blood sugar**, hemoglobin A1c, apolipoprotein B etc.

WHAT IS MENINGITIS?

- Meningitis is an **inflammation** (swelling) of the **protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord.** These membranes are called **meninges**.
- It can be **deadly** and **often results in serious long-term health issues.**
- **Causes**:
  - It can be caused by several species of **bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites.**
  - **Injuries, cancers, and drugs** cause a **small number of cases.**
- **Bacterial meningitis** is the **most serious type** of meningitis. It is a **severe, life-threatening condition** that can often lead to long-term adverse health consequences.
- **Transmission**: Infections that cause meningitis can be spread through **sneezing and coughing.**
- **Treatment and Prevention:**
  - Meningitis is a **medical emergency.** It is **potentially fatal within 24 hours a**nd requires urgent medical attention.
  - **Meningitis caused by bacteria requires immediate antibiotic treatment.**
  - **Vaccines** offer the **best protection against** common types of **bacterial meningitis.**
  - **Antibiotics for close contacts** of those with meningococcal disease, when given promptly, decreases the risk of transmission.
  - **Viral meningitis usually goes away on its own** without treatment.
