



PROCESS OF COUNTING VOTES

About Votes Counting Process

- **642 million voters** participated in the world's largest democratic exercise.
- **Election Commission of India (ECI):** The ECI oversees the entire process, ensuring transparency and fairness in the counting of votes

Supervision and Direction:

- **Returning Officer (RO):** Oversees counting, typically the **District Magistrate** nominated by the ECI.
- **Assistant Returning Officers:** Support ROs, especially when overseeing multiple constituencies.
- **Counting Officials:** Include supervisors, assistants, Group D employees, and micro observers.
 - **Counting Supervisor:** Usually a gazetted officer or equivalent.
 - **Counting Assistant and Staff:** Drawn from Group D employees.
 - **Micro Observer:** Ensures counting process integrity.

Access to Counting Hall:

- **Allowed:** Counting supervisors, assistants, micro observers, ECI-authorized individuals, public servants on duty, candidates, election agents, and counting agents.
- **Not Allowed:** Police officers, government ministers, and mobile phones (except ECI Observer).

Counting Locations:

- Appointed by RO, preferably at their headquarters but can be outside the constituency.
- Separate halls for each Assembly constituency with a maximum of 14 counting tables per hall.

Counting Process:

- EVMs are stored in a Strong Room, opened in the presence of observers and candidates.

- **Postal ballots:** Postal ballots are counted first, followed by EVM counting. The process continues simultaneously until the final tallies are prepared.
- **Result display:** Control Units display results, which are recorded in Form 17C.

Result Announcement:

- They are announced after each round of EVM counting, followed by a parallel count by the ECI Observer.
- VVPAT slips are verified sequentially after all EVM rounds, taking about an hour per machine.

DIRECT SEEDED RICE (DSR)



Recently, ICAR has commercialised herbicide-tolerant (Ht) basmati rice varieties that can control weeds.

- It is a modern rice cultivation technique where rice seeds are directly sown into the field, replacing the traditional method of transplanting seedlings from a nursery.
 - It is an efficient, and sustainable method of rice cultivation that offers significant benefits for farmers, the environment, and the economy.
- **About Herbicide-Tolerant Basmati Rice:** ICAR commercialised **non-genetically modified** (non-GM) Ht basmati rice. These varieties allow direct application of the **herbicide Imazethapyr** due to a mutated **ALS gene**.
- **Scientific debate:** Research indicates that **hand weeding** at specific intervals (20 and 40 days after sowing) in DSR is more effective and yield-enhancing than the use of Imazethapyr.
 - ICAR's research favours eco-friendly hand weeding over repeated herbicide applications for weed control and higher seed yield.
- **Weed diversity and risks:** Imazethapyr targets **specific broadleaf weeds (BLW)**, not all weed types.
 - Herbicide-resistant weeds may evolve, threatening rice production and food security.

- Similar challenges were seen with **Bt-Cotton** and **pink bollworm resistance**.
 - **Historical context:** In the **North Western Plains** (e.g., Punjab, Haryana), DSR has been long used for growing **Basmati rice**.
 - **Green Revolution** promoted water-intensive transplanted rice, causing ecological issues.
 - **Innovations in DSR:** From **2014 to 2017**, innovations in DSR at **IARI Karnal** led to the adoption of **TAR-VATTAR technology**, which uses climatic factors and effective herbicides like **Pendimethalin** to reduce costs and save water.
 - **Recent adoption and impact:** During COVID-19, the labour shortage saw a spike in DSR adoption in Punjab, proving its viability.
 - The Haryana government conserved water (e.g., 31,500 crore litres saved in 2022) by adopting DSR on a large scale.
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WHO WAS AHILYA BAI HOLKAR?



The 300th birth anniversary of the Maratha queen Ahilya Bai Holkar — a great administrator and visionary with a spiritual inclination, was recently celebrated.

- Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar (31 May 1725 – 13 August 1795) was the Holkar Queen of the **Maratha Malwa kingdom**, India.
- She is regarded as one of the most visionary female rulers of India. She is widely known for her wisdom, courage and administrative skills.
- Ahilyabai's husband, **Khanderao Holkar**, was killed in the battle of Kumbher in 1754.
- Twelve years later, her father-in-law, **Malhar Rao Holkar**, died.
- A year after that, she was crowned the queen of Malwa kingdom. For the next 28 years, **Ahilyabai ruled over Malwa** in a just, wise, and knowledgeable manner.
- Under Ahilyabai's rule, Malwa enjoyed **relative peace, prosperity, and stability**, and her **capital, Maheshwar**, was turned into an oasis of literary, musical, artistic, and industrial pursuits.

CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK

- She welcomed stalwarts such as Marathi poet **Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi**, and Sanskrit scholar **Khushali Ram** into her capital.
- She was instrumental in **spreading the message of dharma** and propagating **industrialization**.
- She **established a textile industry in Maheshwar**, which today is very famous for its Maheshwari sarees.
- She tried to protect her kingdom from plundering invaders.
 - She was military-trained and personally led armies into battle.
 - She appointed **Tukojirao Holkar** as the **Chief of Army**.
- She earned a reputation for **administering justice fairly** during her rule, without partiality or partisanship.
 - She sentenced her only son, found guilty of a capital offense, to death by being crushed by an elephant.
- She was a great **pioneer and builder of Hindu temples**.
 - She built hundreds of temples and Dharmashalas throughout India.
 - Her most notable contribution was the renovation and **repair of the famous Kashi Vishwanath Temple in 1780**.
- She also made some landmark decisions during her reign, including the **removal of traditional law confiscating the property of childless widows**.
- She **held daily public audiences** to help redress the problems of the common man.
- **John Keay**, the British historian, gave the queen the title of ‘**The Philosopher Queen**’.
- She passed away on August 13, 1795, at the age of seventy.
- Her throne was then **succeeded by her commander-in-chief and nephew, Tukojirao Holkar**.



UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN FORUM

The inaugural United Nations Global Supply Chain Forum, organized by UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Government of Barbados, concluded successfully recently.

- It was the **inaugural edition** of the forum, which was held from May 21 to 24, 2024, in **Barbados**.
- It was **hosted by UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** in collaboration with the **Government of Barbados**.
- Over 1,000 participants from around the world convened to tackle the pressing issues of **global disruptions, geopolitical tensions, climate change and the COVID-19** pandemic and their impact on global trade.
 - It gathered key figures, including **trade and transport Ministers** from several small island developing states (SIDS).
 - Representatives from various UN agencies, major ports like the Port of Seattle, and industry leaders in shipping and logistics were also present.
- The forum underscored the complexities and opportunities in **decarbonizing global shipping**, with a particular focus on developing countries rich in renewable energy resources.
- Efforts to **incentivize low- or zero-carbon fuels**, establish **safety frameworks for new fuels**, and **enhance port readiness** for handling various fuels were identified as critical steps in driving sustainable freight transport and logistics.
- One of the major outcomes of the forum was the launch of the “**Manifesto for Intermodal, Low-Carbon, Efficient and Resilient Freight Transport and Logistics**.”
 - This manifesto calls for a significant **transformation in freight transport** to achieve global climate targets and improve socio-economic resilience, emphasizing the transition to zero-emission fuels, optimized logistics, and sustainable value chains.
- **Digital technologies** were highlighted as key to enhancing global supply chain resilience.
- Ministers from SIDS advocated for **international financial support** and investment in green and sustainable technologies to enhance energy efficiency and combat marine pollution.

- A significant achievement of the forum was the **launch of the UN Trade and Development Trade-and-Transport Dataset**, developed in collaboration with the World Bank.
 - This comprehensive repository provides **global data on over 100 commodities and various transport modes**, offering a holistic view of trade and transport costs.
 - The next forum is set to take place in **Saudi Arabia** in 2026.
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WHAT IS PRESTON CURVE?

The Preston curve refers to a certain empirical relationship that is witnessed between life expectancy and per capita income in a country.

Preston Curve is a graphical representation that shows the **relationship between a country's per capita income** (usually measured as GDP per capita) **and its average life expectancy**.

- It was first proposed by American sociologist **Samuel H. Preston** in his 1975 paper, “The changing relation between mortality and level of economic development”.
- Preston found that **people living in richer countries** generally **had longer life spans** when compared with people living in poorer countries.
- This is likely because people in wealthier countries have **better access to healthcare**, are **better educated**, live in **cleaner surroundings**, enjoy **better nutrition** etc.
- When a poor country begins to grow, its per capita income rises and **causes a significant increase in life expectancy initially** as people are able to consume more than just subsistence calories, enjoy better healthcare, etc.
- For example, the average per capita income of Indians rose from around ₹9,000 per year in 1947 to around ₹55,000 per year in 2011. During the same period, the average life expectancy of Indians rose from a mere 32 years to over 66 years.
- However, the **positive relationship between per capita income and life expectancy begins to flatten out after a certain point**.

- In other words, an increase in the per capita income of a country does not cause much of a rise in the life expectancy of its population beyond a point, perhaps **because human life span cannot be increased indefinitely.**
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WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION (IATA)?

India will host the world's most premier aviation event, the annual general meeting (AGM) of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), next year, after a gap of 42 years.



- IATA is an **international trade association** for the world's airlines, established in 1945 in Havana, Cuba, with 57 founding members.
- Its mission is "**to represent, lead and serve the airline industry.**"
- IATA advocates for the interests of airlines on the world stage in addition to creating industry standards that
 - simplify processes,
 - increase safety,
 - enhance passenger convenience,
 - reduce costs,
 - improve efficiency and
 - help achieve sustainability goals.
- It currently represents some **330 airlines**, comprising over 80% of global air traffic.
- IATA members include the world's leading passenger and cargo airlines.
- **Headquarters:** Montreal, Canada.
- **Functions:**
 - IATA supports many areas of aviation activity and helps **formulate industry policy** on critical aviation issues, including environmental concerns.
 - The association advocates on behalf of airlines worldwide, **challenging arbitrary laws and charges**, holding regulators and governments accountable and striving for responsible regulation.

- Its goal is to **help airlines reduce costs** and improve efficiency by simplifying operations and boosting passenger convenience.
 - It **assists airlines in operating under clearly defined norms** in a safe, secure, efficient, and cost-effective manner.
 - **Professional assistance** is offered to all industry stakeholders in the form of a diverse offering of goods and professional services.
 - The IATA Annual General Meeting & World Air Transport Summit, **held in June each year**, formalises industry positions on industry and public policy issues and provides a focus for emerging industry issues.
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PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN SAMMAN NIDHI (PM-KISAN) SCHEME

- The PM-Kisan Yojana is a central government scheme which aims to **provide financial support** (Rs. 6000/ year in 3 instalments of 2000) to all landholding farmers' families of India.
 - This will be directly transferred to the eligible beneficiaries bank account through Direct Benefit Transfer (**DBT**).
- The initiative was launched on **February 24, 2019** under the MoA&FW and the first instalment (for the Dec-March 2018-19 cycle, since the scheme came into effect from Dec 2018) was transferred to 3.03 crore beneficiaries.
- The scheme **offers additional financial aid to farmers** for procuring diverse inputs needed for agriculture and related activities, including ensuring good crop yield while meeting their domestic necessities.
- The PM-Kisan is a **Central Sector scheme** with 100% funding from the Centre, while the identification of the eligible farmer families will be done by the state and UT governments.

A 5-Year Report Card of the PM-Kisan Scheme:

- Since the launch of this path-breaking scheme, there has been no looking back.

- The scheme has **benefitted more than 11 crore eligible farmer families** with Rs 3 lakh crore transferred directly to their accounts in the last five years.
- Of this, **Rs 1.75 lakh crore** have been transferred to eligible farmers **during the Covid-19** period alone, when they needed direct cash benefits the most.
- Of the 9.09 crore farmers who received the 16th instalment of PM-Kisan, a maximum of 2.03 crore were in UP, followed by Maharashtra (89.66 lakh) and MP (79.93 lakh).
- **The 17th instalment** for the period (April-July 2024) is due and may be released anytime soon after the new government is sworn.
- According to a study conducted by IFPRI on farmers of UP, **the benefits under the PM-Kisan scheme reached the majority of farmers** and they received the full amount without any leakages.
 - The farmers receiving cash transfers under PM-Kisan were more likely to invest in **buying agricultural equipment, seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides.**
- **The inclusive nature of the scheme** is reflected in the fact that at least one out of four beneficiaries is a woman farmer, besides more than 85% of small and marginal farmers being the beneficiaries under the scheme.

Efforts to Make the Scheme More Efficient, Effective and Transparent:

- **A farmer-centric digital infrastructure** has been made to ensure the benefits of the scheme reach all the farmers across the country without any middleman involvement.
- **The PM-Kisan portal** was integrated with the portals of -
 - The Unique Identification Authority of India,
 - The Public Financial Management System,
 - The National Payments Corporation of India, and
 - The Income Tax Department.
- **A continuous impact assessment** for further improvement in the scheme is also done by taking feedback through the Kisan Call Centre and field surveys.