

Current Affairs

UPSC Prelims 2024

LECTURE-06

By Kinshuk Sir





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**CURRENT AFFAIRS
DISCUSSION**

Topic of the Day

- **Newspaper Reading**
- **Electoral Bond Scheme**
- **MSP**
- **MS Swaminathan**
- **GROW initiative**
- **SWATI portal**
- **NGT**

What to Read in Newspapers?

- **History:** ✓
- Some News related to IVC, Sangam etc
- Architecture or monuments in News, UNESCO world heritage sites inclusion
- Art forms: Painting, Music, Classical Dance
- Social reformers in News ✓
- **What Not to Read?**
- **Daily performance by some artists**
- **Geography:**
- Weather Patterns changing: Monsoon, El Nino, La Nina, Cyclones,
- **What Not to read?**
- There was heavy rainfall in Delhi last night.

What to Read in Newspapers?

- **Society & Social Justice:**
- Women, Children, Weaker & Marginalised section:
- What to see: Some Facts, Editorial, laws & Policies
- **Polity & Governance:**
- Major change: Some new bills or acts, Functioning of parliament or executive
- Important Judgements of Judiciary: Relation with FR, Federal Structure or other basic structure of constitution
- Some New Schemes in News

What to Read in Newspapers?

- **Schemes** ✓
- Ministry
- Target Group: Inclusion & Exclusion ✓ ✓
- Objective ✓
- Fund Sharing: Central sector or Sponsored
- Time frame
- Uniqueness

What to Read in Newspapers?

- **International Relations & World Affairs:**
- India's relation with rest of world
- Any reform related news in Global Institutions ✓
- Major Change in Global order – but not the daily scuffle
- International events attended by Indian PM or President
- **What not to read?**
- No need to read the daily update of existing bilateral treaties in details.

What to read in Economy?

- Some major change in Economic Policy
- New Announcement for MSME sector, food processing sector, Agriculture etc
- New Initiatives by RBI
- Trends of major economic indicators such as Forex Reserves, Trade deficit, trade surplus etc
- **What not to read?**
- How much Repo rate changed
- How much loan given and taken etc

What to read in Environment?

- Species
- Protected area network
- Laws & Policies
- Institutions
- Protocols and Conventions

Extinction / New / Unique

What to read in Science Tech?

- New development in Technology such as AI, IOT, optical fibre network, 5G etc
- New development in Bio technology
- New development in space technology
- **What not to read?**
- Daily missile test ✓
- Daily development in some installations ✓

Watch
James
Space

Artemis

Editorial

- Take 1-2 editorial on daily basis
- Take the facts from there
- Note down the arguments- both positive and negative
- Note down some policies, reports or laws mentioned there
- Note down the suggestions
- Try to write in your own words. The crux of the editorial in 4-5 lines

150
Int
365
90 min

❖ Electoral Bonds

- Electoral bonds are interest-free bearer bonds or money instruments that can be purchased by companies and individuals in India from authorised branches of the State Bank of India (SBI).
- These bonds are sold in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh, and Rs 1 crore.
- They can be purchased through a KYC-compliant account to make donations to a political party.

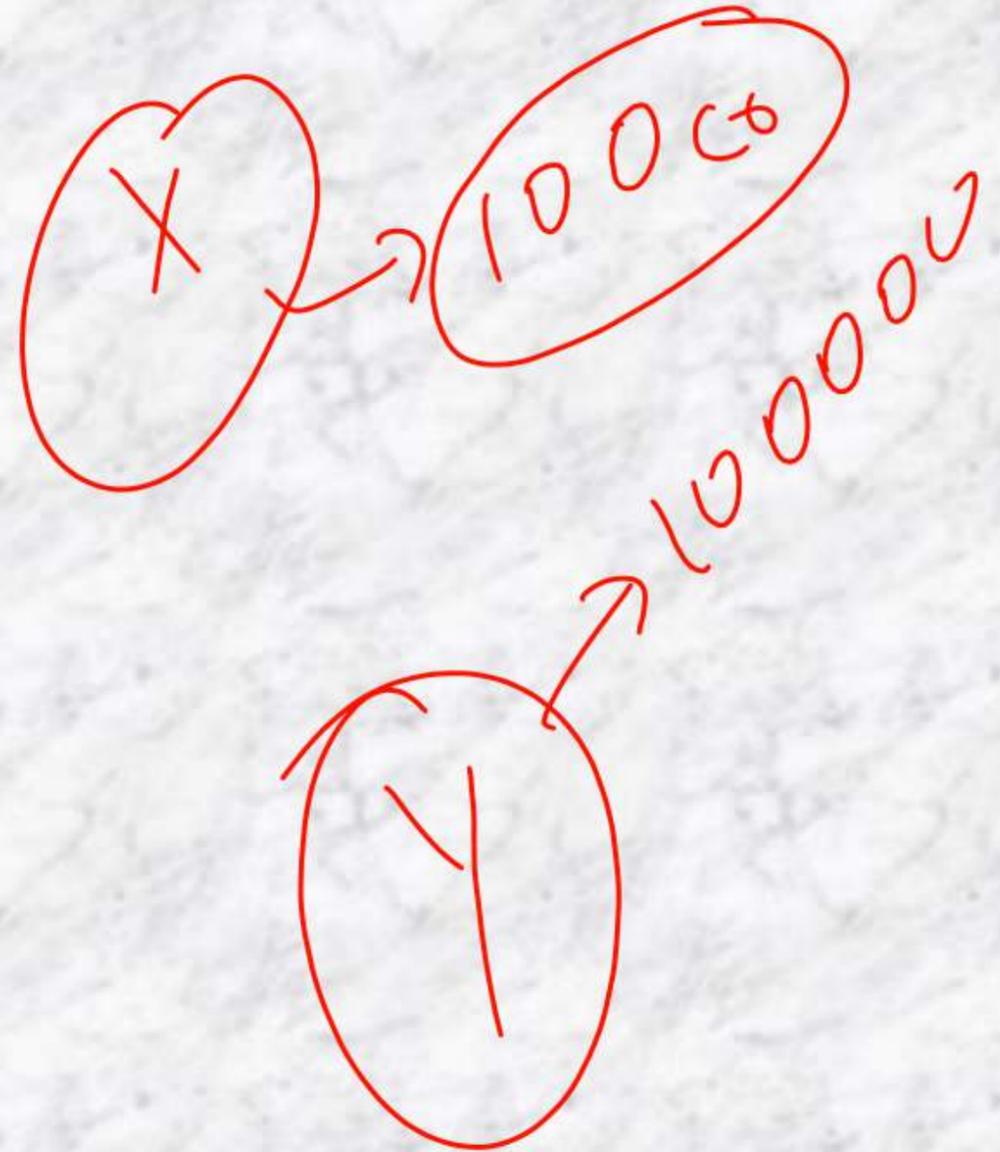


- **The political parties have to encash them within a stipulated time.**
- **The name and other information of the donor are not entered on the instrument and thus electoral bonds are said to be anonymous.**
- **There is no cap on the number of electoral bonds that a person or company can purchase.**
- **The government brought in amendments to four Acts to introduce the Electoral Bond Scheme via the Finance Act of 2016 and 2017.**

- **These acts are the Representation of the People Act, 1951, (RPA), the Companies Act, 2013, the Income Tax Act, 1961, and the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act, 2010 (FCRA), through the Finance Acts of 2016 and 2017.**
- **Political parties that secured at least 1% of the votes polled in the recent Lok Sabha or State Assembly elections and are registered under the RPA can get a verified account from the Election Commission of India (ECI).**
- **The bond amounts are deposited in this account within 15 days of their purchase.**

➤ Recent Judgement

- The Supreme Court struck down the electoral bonds scheme that allows anonymous donations to political parties as unconstitutional.
- It asserted that the scheme violates the right to information under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.
- The five-judge Constitution Bench also quashed the amendments made to the Income Tax Act and the Representation of People Act which made the donations anonymous



- **The court further ruled that the amendment to the Companies Act which allows blanket corporate political funding is unconstitutional.**
- **A company has graver influence on the political process than contributions by individuals. Contributions by companies are purely business transactions. Amendment to Section 182 Companies Act is manifestly arbitrary for treating companies and individuals alike**

❖ Farmer's Protest and What is MSP?

- **What are the major demands of the Farmers?**
- **A law to guarantee minimum support price (MSP) for all crops, and the determination of crop prices in accordance with the Dr M S Swaminathan Commission's report.**
- **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 four times the collector rate;**

Handwritten notes in red ink: A box is drawn around the text "A law to guarantee minimum support price (MSP) for all crops, and the determination of crop prices in accordance with the Dr M S Swaminathan Commission's report." An arrow points from the box to the word "Harkh". Below the box, the words "Lakh Laksh" are written.

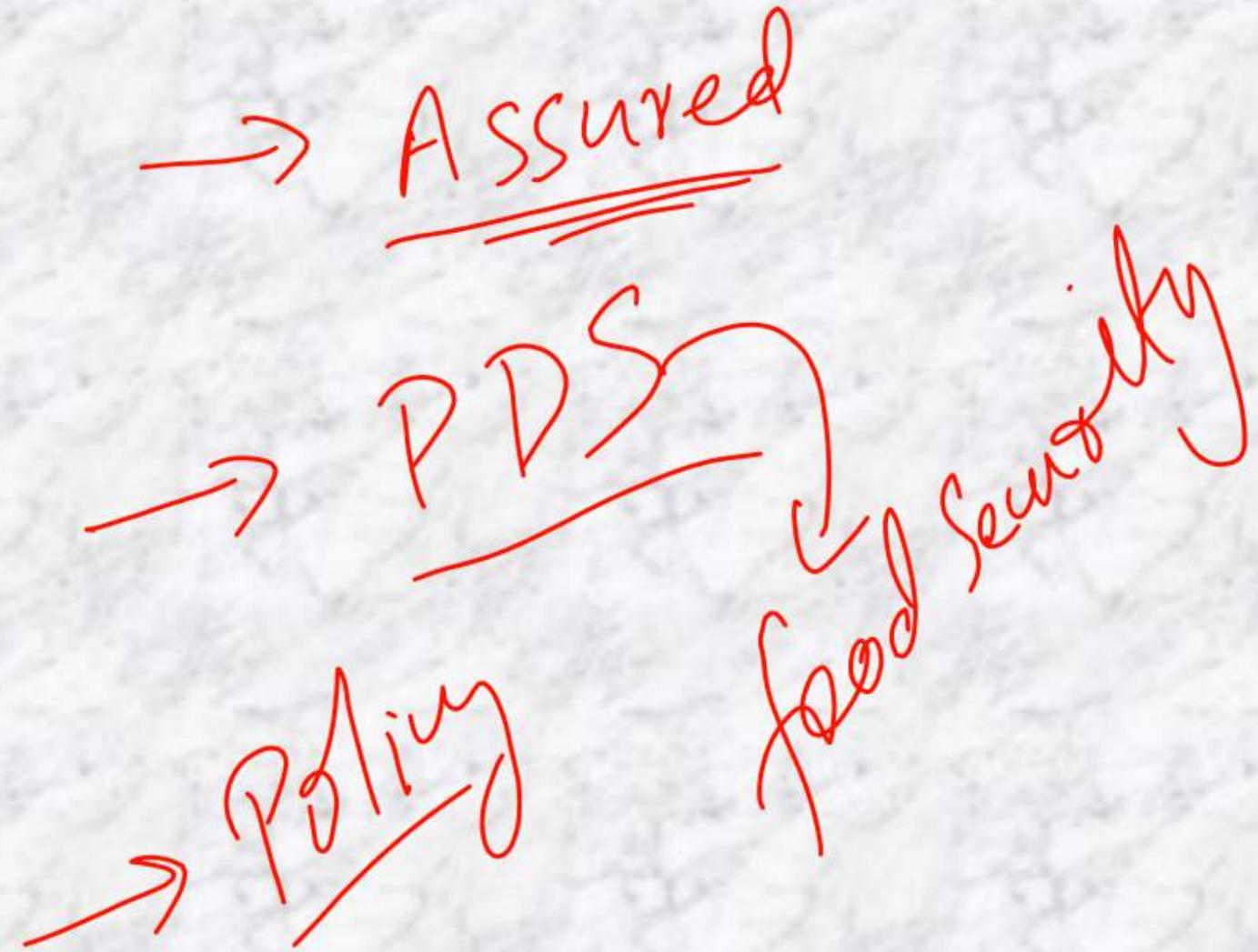
- India should withdraw from the World Trade Organization (WTO) and freeze all free trade agreements;
- Pensions for farmers and farm labourers
- Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 should be scrapped;
- 200 (instead of 100) days' employment under MGNREGA per year, the daily wage of Rs 700, and the scheme should be linked with farming;
- Strict penalties and fines on companies producing fake seeds, pesticides, fertilisers; improvements in seed quality;

120
140

- National commission for spices such as chilli and turmeric;
- Ensure the rights of indigenous peoples over water, forests, and land.
- What is MSP?
- During each cropping season, the government announces minimum support prices for 23 crops. Simply put, the MSP for a crop is the price at which the government is supposed to procure/buy that crop from farmers if the market price falls below it.

Wheat Paddy 10 million tonne
US
10 million wheat
Ship to mouth

- **Its significance:**
- **As such, MSPs provide a floor for market prices, and ensure that farmers receive a certain “minimum” remuneration so that their costs of cultivation (and some profit) can be recovered.**
- **The MSPs serve one more policy purpose. Using them, the government incentivises the production of certain crops, thus ensuring that India does not run out of staple food grains.**



- Typically, MSPs create the benchmark for farm prices not just in those commodities for which they are announced, but also in crops that are substitutes.
- The MSPs are announced by the Union government (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs) and as such, it is the government's decision. But the government largely bases its decision on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACAP).
- While recommending MSPs, the CACP looks at the following factors:

Commission on
Agricultural
Cost and
Prices

June

CACP

Before the
sowing

- the demand and supply of a commodity;
- its cost of production;
- the market price trends (both domestic and international);
- inter-crop price parity; ✓
- the terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture (that is, the ratio of prices of farm inputs and farm outputs);
- a minimum of 50 per cent as the margin over the cost of production; and
- the likely implications of an MSP on consumers of that product.

Wheat
Jowar
Paddy

➤ Challenges of MSP

- It is recognized that 95% of the farmers across the country are functioning outside the MSP system. This could be due to a plethora of factors, such as lack of awareness, inadequate farm size, reluctance to use MSP mandis, etc. The ones left out of MSP are the small and marginal farmers who constitute 86% of the farming workforce and own less than 2 hectares of land each.
- The reach of MSP is very limited. It is restricted to certain regions that produce

85-86%

- wheat and rice. The MSP is biased against 70% of rainfed farmers who grow millets, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables. This has led to a distortion in cropping patterns, not only affecting food crops but also impacting the edible oil sector, forcing us to spend huge amounts on imports.
- Centralised procurement and storing is one of the biggest challenges of the MSP regime. This not only adds to overhead costs but also leads to a high percentage of wastage as grains rot in warehouses due to inadequate storage facilities.

- **MSP regimes may give temporary profits to well-to-do farmers and agribusiness companies, but excessive application of chemical inputs will lead to the loss of soil health, destruction of natural pollinators, excessive extraction of water and reliance on monocultures that will eventually begin to collapse in the long run.**
- **WTO barrier:** Price support provided in the form of procurement of crops at MSP is classified as a trade-distorting subsidy and falls under the 'amber box' measures, which are subject to certain limits.

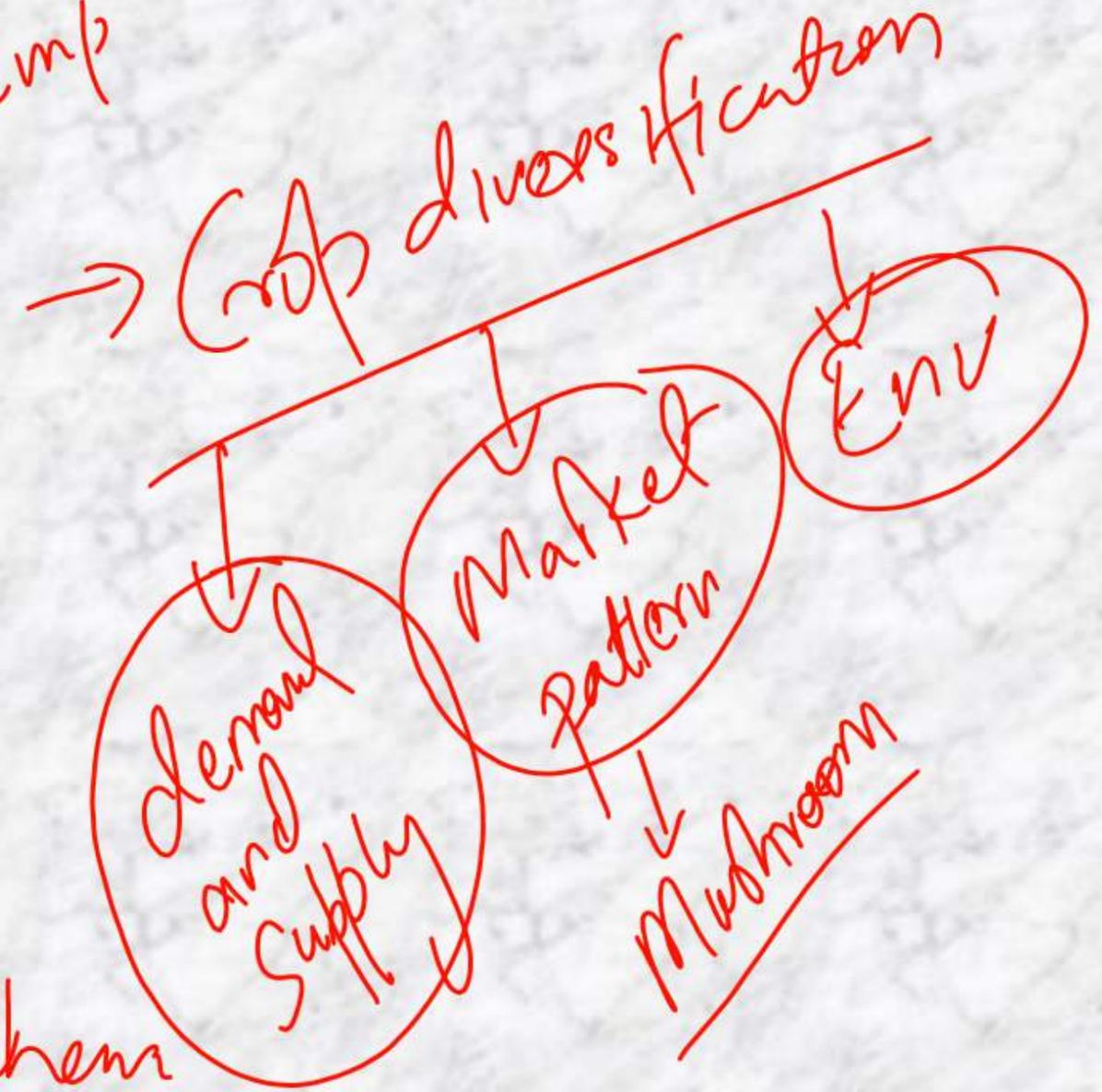
→ FNVR
→ Diversification

Russell

➤ Way forward:

- **Crop Diversification:** The government and farm leaders need to engage in long-term dialogues to reform the MSP regime. Together, they need to evolve a strategy that is able to provide assured income to farmers through crop diversification and addressing the ecological issues to sustain the basic capital of soil and water that provide nutritional security in the times of climate crisis.

temp



→ Mid day meal scheme

- **Income-based support:** India can move away from price-based support in the form of MSP to income-based support, which will not be trade-distorting under WTO Norms.
- **Public procurement needs to continue for staple cereals, but farmers of non-staple food crops need to be provided with direct income transfers—these are fiscally prudent, obviate the need for physical procurement and storage by the government, do not distort current production, and also provide a basic income to farmers.**

❖ MS Swaminathan conferred Bharat Ratna

➤ Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the late Indian agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan, as well as former Prime Ministers PV Narasimha Rao and Chaudhary Charan Singh, would be conferred the Bharat Ratna.

➤ About MS Swaminathan

➤ Monkomb Sambasivan Swaminathan, 98, passed away last year on September 28.

1947
110 min

- He is called the 'Father of the Green Revolution'.
- He played a major role in the set of changes introduced in farming in the 1960s and '70s that helped India achieve food security.
- Early on in his career, he cleared the examination for the civil services but Swaminathan was interested in agriculture foremost and soon ended up pursuing research in the field.
- He served as an Independent Chairman of the Food and Agricultural Organisation

- **Council (1981-85), President of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (1984-90), President of the World Wide Fund for Nature (India) from 1989-96 and the Director General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**
- **The Green Revolution Story:**
- **In the post-independence, Indian agriculture was not very productive.**
- **Years of colonial rule impacted its development and the nation lacked the resources to modernise the sector.**

- **As a result, crops necessary for staple foods also had to be imported from countries like the US.**
- **In 1960s, India was leading a “ship-to-mouth existence”.**
- **We had to depend on PL480 wheat from the US. In 1966, a year that also saw severe drought, 10 million tonnes of PL480 wheat were imported.**
- **The Green Revolution, which involved the provision of high-yielding variety seeds, adequate irrigation facilities and fertilisers**

- to Indian farmers in regions of Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh primarily, changed this dramatically.
- In 1947, when India became independent, we were producing about 6 million tonnes of wheat a year. By 1962, wheat production went to about 10 million tonnes a year.
- But between 1964 and 1968, annual production of wheat increased from about 10 million tonnes to about 17 million tonnes
- In the present times, the annual production of wheat is approximately 110 million tonnes.

❖ **GROW initiative**

- **NITI Aayog launched the Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW) report and portal.**
- **This initiative uses remote sensing and GIS to map agroforestry potential across India, supporting greening efforts at national, state, and district levels.**
- **Agroforestry: What is it?**
- **Agroforestry, which integrates trees, crops, and livestock, addresses multifaceted challenges related to food security,**

- **nutrition, energy, employment, and environmental conservation.**
- **Presently, agroforestry covers 8.65% of India's total geographical area, encompassing approximately 28.42 million hectares.**
- **The GROW report emphasizes the immense potential of converting underutilized areas, particularly wastelands, into productive agroforestry zones.**
- **This initiative aligns with national commitments to restore 26 million hectares**

- of degraded land by 2030 and establish an additional carbon sink capable of sequestering 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.
- **Purpose of GROW Initiative**
- The GROW initiative represents a monumental step towards achieving sustainability and resilience in land use.
- By harnessing the power of technology and collaborative expertise, India is poised to transform its landscape, turning wastelands into thriving agroforestry systems.

- **This initiative not only contributes to environmental restoration but also sets a global benchmark for sustainable development practices.**
- **As the GROW initiative unfolds, its impact on India's green cover, carbon sequestration efforts, and agricultural productivity will undoubtedly be profound, paving the way for a greener, more sustainable future.**

❖ **SWATI Portal: Science For Women: A Technology & Innovation**

- **A single online portal on Indian women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine (STEMM) was launched by Ministry of Science & Technology**
- **SWATI portal will serve in policy making to address the challenges of Gender-gap.**
- **It is a complete interactive database and the first-of-its-kind in India which is developed, hosted and maintained by the National**

STEMM

- **Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR)**
- **This is the initiative of Inter Academy Panel (IAP) on Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine (STEMM)**
- **This is a dynamically growing portal and the endeavour is to have data of all women scientists of the country available at a click of a button**
- **The objectives of the SWATI portal include**
- **to scale up the effort exponentially to include each and every Indian woman in science, across all career stages and subjects,**

- **spanning both academia and the industry,**
- **enabling reliable and statistically significant long term research on the issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in India.**

- **Women in STEM field**
- According to a 2023 report by the World Economic Forum, women make up 27% of India's STEM workforce, compared to 32% of the non-STEM workforce.
- However, a 2020 report by the United Nations states that 43% of STEM graduates in India are women, the highest in the world.
- A study by UNESCO also found that only 35% of STEM students in higher education in India are women

M S M I E
Micro
SMALL
MEDIUM

❖ National Green Tribunal Act 2010

- **Context:** Supreme Court criticizes NGT for passing ex parte orders without hearing affected parties.
- The National Green Tribunal has been established on 18.10.2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010 for
- effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and
- conservation of forests and other natural resources including enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and

- **giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.**
- **The Tribunal shall not be bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.**
- **The Tribunal's dedicated jurisdiction in environmental matters shall provide speedy environmental justice and help reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts.**

- **The Tribunal is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.**
- **Initially, the NGT is proposed to be set up at five places of sittings and will follow circuit procedure for making itself more accessible. New Delhi is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai shall be the other 4 place of sitting of the Tribunal.**

- **Laws that NGT deals with, include:**
- **The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974,**
- **The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977,**
- **The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980,**
- **The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,**
- **The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986,**
- **The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991**
- **The Biological Diversity act 2002**

- **Are decisions of the Court binding?**
- **Yes, decisions of the Tribunal are binding. The Tribunal's orders are enforceable as the powers vested are the same as in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.**
- **Are decisions of the Tribunal final?**
- **The Tribunal has powers to review its own decisions. If this fails, the decision can be challenged before the Supreme Court within ninety days.**

- **Qualifications:**
- **Chairperson:** A person who is or has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or Chief Justice of the High Court.
- **Judicial Member:** A person who is or has been a Judge of a High Court



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THANKS FOR WATCHING

