



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 13-05-2024**

### **GS-2**

1. **The Fraying of the Model code of conduct**

### **GS-3**

2. **Export -Import in Agri sector**
3. **Oxytocin**
4. **AI deadbots**
5. **Climatization of forests**

## **The Fraying of the Model code of conduct**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Elections and Model Code of Conduct.**

**Context:**

- *The **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** is in the spotlight again due to senior politicians violating it during the 18th Lok Sabha election campaign.*

**Background:**

- *It was established by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** with input from all political parties to ensure peaceful and civilized elections.*
- *However, during Indian elections, the consensus often breaks down **as parties resort to aggressive tactics.***
- ***Distortions, falsehoods, misinterpretations, and verbal attacks** have become common during campaigns.*
- *The Constitution **empowers the ECI to conduct free and fair elections**, considering it a fundamental aspect of India's democratic structure.*
- ***Article 324 grants the ECI broad powers** to ensure the integrity of the electoral process.*
- *In a 1993 case (*Election Commission of India vs State of Tamil Nadu and Others*), the Supreme Court affirmed the ECI's authority to oversee free and fair elections and maintain the purity of the electoral process.*

**Key provisions:**

- *Prohibition of activities that **promote communal hatred** or tension between different groups.*
- *Limiting criticism of other parties to their policies and programs, **with no room for unverified allegations or distortions.***
- *Prohibition of **appeals to caste or communal feelings** to secure votes.*
- ***Ban on corrupt practices** or offenses under election laws by parties or candidates.*
- *Violations of these provisions **undermine the integrity of elections** and the purity of the electoral process.*
- *It is the duty of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to **promptly investigate violations** and take appropriate action against offenders to maintain the purity of the electoral process.*
- *The question arises about the actions the Commission can take in such cases.*

**On deterrent action:**

- *The **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** lacks legal enforceability, meaning relief cannot be sought from the court for its violation.*

- *The only recourse for aggrieved parties is to complain to the Election Commission (ECI).*
- *The **Representation of the People Act** and **Conduct of Election Rules** do not directly address the MCC, but the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order of 1968** provides provisions for dealing with MCC violations.*
- ***Paragraph 16A of the Symbols Order** empowers the ECI to suspend or withdraw the recognition of a party for violating the MCC, which would deprive the party of its reserved symbol, causing significant electoral challenges.*
- *The ECI has the **authority to take decisive action against violators**, such as suspending their election campaigns for a period or removing them from the campaign altogether, regardless of their position within the party.*
- *Despite this power, recent trends show a **lack of decisive action by the ECI**, especially since the tenure of T.N. Seshan, who was known for his stringent enforcement.*
- *Indian elections have **become fiercely competitive**, with adversaries viewed as enemies, leading to the erosion of the civil democratic process.*
- ***Politicians often exploit religious divisions**, despite secularism being a foundational principle of the Indian Constitution.*
- *The **Representation of People Act** prohibits appeals in the name of religion as corrupt practices, aiming to keep religion out of the electoral arena, but politicians frequently bring it back into focus during campaigns.*
- *There is a call for the ECI to address this issue **seriously to maintain the integrity of the electoral process**.*

#### **A violation of oath:**

- *Senior members of the Council of Ministers making communally charged speeches during election campaigns **have not faced stern consequences** from either the Election Commission of India (ECI) or the courts.*
- *Such speeches, which **contain toxic references to particular religions, communities, or castes** and can incite hatred among voters, violate the oath taken by Ministers to serve all citizens without bias.*
- *While the **Constitution and election laws do not specify punishments** for Ministers violating their oath, **Section 125 of the Representation of People Act 1951** allows for a maximum three-year sentence for promoting enmity or hatred based on religion.*
- *Ministers, as **holders of high constitutional office**, are obligated to serve all citizens impartially, and any actions or statements contrary to this principle should be seriously addressed.*

- *The Supreme Court emphasizes the importance of maintaining the purity of elections, defining it as not only free from corrupt practices but also **from evil practices such as promoting hatred based on religion, caste, or community.***
- *The **Constitution grants significant powers to the ECI, which should be exercised when necessary to uphold the integrity of elections.***

### Practice Question

*Q. Analyze the impact of Model Code of Conduct violations on electoral integrity and suggest measures to enforce accountability within a democratic framework. (15 marks, 250 words)*

## **Export -Import in Agri sector**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Agriculture Economics.**

### Context:

- *Curbs on rice, wheat, sugar and onion shipments have taken a toll on India's farm exports in the fiscal ended, after a record-breaking performance in 2022-23.*

### Background:

- *India's agricultural exports decreased by **8.2% in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.***
- *This decline was due to restrictions on exports of various commodities like cereals, sugar, and onions.*
- *The total value of **agricultural exports in 2023-24 was \$48.82 billion, lower than the record high of \$53.15 billion in 2022-23.***
- *In the previous fiscal year, the total **agricultural exports were \$50.24 billion.***
- *Global agricultural commodity prices experienced a significant decrease, with the **UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index** dropping from an average of 119.1 to 96.5 points between 2013-14 and 2019-20.*
- *The decline in global prices made **India's agricultural exports less competitive and increased vulnerability to imports.***
- *However, following the **COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine,** there was a global price recovery, with the FAO index soaring to 140.8 in 2022-23.*
- *This resulted in India's agricultural exports and imports reaching all-time highs in 2022-23 before dropping in the most recent fiscal year.*

### Drivers of export:

- **Sugar and non-basmati rice** were the primary contributors to the decline in exports.
- The **government-imposed restrictions on sugar exports** during the current production year starting from October 2023, **resulting in a significant decrease in exports** to \$2.82 billion in 2023-24, compared to \$5.77 billion and \$4.60 billion in the previous fiscal years.
- Concerns over **domestic availability and food inflation** led to a ban on exports of all white non-basmati rice since July 2023, with only parboiled grain shipments permitted within the non-basmati segment, subject to a 20% duty.
- This led to a decrease in overall non-basmati exports from \$6.36 billion in 2022-23 to \$4.57 billion in 2023-24.
- Export restrictions due to domestic shortages and rising prices also **affected wheat and onion exports**.
- **Wheat exports were halted in May 2022**, leading to a sharp decline in their value to \$56.74 million in 2023-24, compared to an all-time high of \$2.12 billion in 2021-22.
- **Most major agricultural export items**, except for marine products, castor oil, and other cereals (mainly maize), experienced growth.
- **Basmati rice exports reached \$5.84 billion** in 2023-24, surpassing the previous high of \$4.86 billion in 2013-14.
- **Spices exports** crossed the \$4 billion mark for the first time.
- However, **exports of buffalo meat, oil meals, and raw cotton**, while increased compared to 2022-23, remained below their previous records of \$4.78 billion, \$3.04 billion, and \$4.33 billion, achieved in 2014-15, 2012-13, and 2011-12, respectively.

#### Drivers of Import:

- The overall decline of 7.9% in agricultural imports during 2023-24 was primarily driven by a **significant decrease in imports of edible oils**.
- **India's imports of vegetable fats reached over \$20 billion in 2022-23**, following the **Russia-Ukraine war**, when global prices were high, with the FAO index averaging 140.8 points and the vegetable oil sub-index averaging 168.5 points.
- However, in **2023-24, the average FAO index dropped to 121.6 points**, and the vegetable oil sub-index decreased to 123.4 points, resulting in lower global prices and **reducing the vegetable oil import bill to below \$15 billion for the fiscal year**.
- **Despite the reduction in spending on cooking oil imports**, imports of pulses nearly doubled to \$3.75 billion in 2023-24, the highest level since 2015-16 and 2016-17 when imports reached \$3.90 billion and \$4.24 billion, respectively.

#### Policy takeaways:

- *Farmers and agricultural traders **seek policy stability and predictability** to conduct business effectively.*
- *Policies such as export bans or restrictions, even on byproducts like de-oiled rice bran, often **prioritize consumer interests over producer interests**.*
- *However, sudden policy changes **can have severe consequences**, as seen with the abrupt halt in wheat exports.*
- *Economists suggest a more predictable and rules-based approach –*
- *such as introducing **temporary tariffs instead of outright bans** or quantitative restrictions, to provide stability to agricultural markets.*
- *Similarly, import policies, such as **eliminating import duties on most pulses** and keeping them low for certain edible oils, can contradict the government's objective of **promoting crop diversification** away from water-intensive crops like rice, wheat, and sugarcane.*
- *The incoming government post-elections may need to **formulate a more rational export-import policy** that balances the interests of producers and consumers, while also aligning with short- and long-term goals for the agricultural sector, such as crop diversification and reducing dependence on imports.*

### Practice Question

*Q. Discuss the impact of government policies on agricultural exports and imports, analyzing the balance between producer and consumer interests, and proposing measures for sustainable market growth. (15 marks, 250 words)*

## Oxytocin

### Syllabus: GS-3; General Science

#### Context

- *The Delhi High Court has issued directives to combat the use of spurious Oxytocin hormone in the **dairy colonies** across the national capital, stressing the need to address **animal cruelty and public health concerns**.*

#### Into the news

- *The Delhi High Court has ordered State authorities to take action against the spurious use of oxytocin on cattle in dairy colonies in the Capital.*
- *It noted that administering the hormone, which results in increased milk production, amounts to animal cruelty and is, therefore, an offence.*



**Know more**

- *Oxytocin is a hormone produced in the hypothalamus and released into the bloodstream by the pituitary gland.*
- *It's also known as the "love hormone" or "cuddle chemical" because it's associated with trust, sexual arousal, and relationship building.*

**What is OXYTOCIN?**

Also called the 'love hormone' Oxytocin plays an important role in reproduction, feelings of attraction and bonding with our young.

Oxytocin is thought to eliminate fear and encourage TRUST.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Oxytocin was the first polypeptide to be synthesized. It's synthetic version is known today as "Pitocin" and is used in labor inductions.

**WHAT STIMULATES OXYTOCIN?**

- Sex
- Nipple stimulation
- Safety
- Chocolate
- Soft music
- Massage

Oxytocin released at birth and during breastfeeding helps contract the uterus and stop bleeding.

**Big Oxytocin releases happen during:**

- SEX
- CHILDBIRTH
- BREASTFEEDING

**WWW.BIRTHBOOTCAMP.COM**

Oxytocin actually means "quick birth."

**AI deadbots**

## Syllabus: GS-3; Science and Technology

### Context

- *AI simulations of dead people risk “unwanted digital hauntings”, researchers have warned.*



### About

- *Deadbots, also known as griefbots, are AI-enabled digital representations of departed loved ones.*



- *These chatbots simulate their language patterns and personality traits using their digital footprint, like emails, social media posts and even voice recordings, to create a conversational AI that reflects their personality.*

### **What are the potential ethical concerns?**

*AI chatbots that utilize natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning to learn from human interactions raise several potential ethical concerns, including :*

- **Bias and Fairness :** *AI chatbots may inadvertently perpetuate or amplify biases present in the training data, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes.*
  - *Biases in the data, such as racial or gender biases, can result in biased responses or decisions by the chatbot, which can have negative implications for users.*
- **Privacy and Data Security :** *AI chatbots may process sensitive personal information shared by users during interactions, raising concerns about privacy and data security.*
  - *Unauthorized access, misuse, or mishandling of user data by chatbots can result in privacy breaches, identity theft, or other security risks.*
- **Transparency and Accountability :** *AI chatbots that use complex algorithms and machine learning models may lack transparency and accountability in their decision-making processes.*
  - *Users may not understand how the chatbot arrived at a particular response or decision, making it difficult to hold the chatbot accountable for errors or biases.*
- **Manipulation and Deception :** *AI chatbots may be designed or trained to manipulate or deceive users for malicious purposes, such as spreading misinformation, phishing attacks, or social engineering scams.*
  - *Users may be misled or deceived by chatbots that mimic human-like behavior and interactions.*
- **Emotional Manipulation :** *AI chatbots that simulate human emotions or empathy may manipulate users' emotions for persuasive or manipulative purposes.*
  - *Users may develop emotional attachments to chatbots or be influenced by emotionally manipulative tactics employed by chatbots, leading to ethical concerns about emotional manipulation.*
- **User Consent and Autonomy :** *Users may not be fully aware of or consent to the collection, processing, and use of their data by AI chatbots.*
  - *Lack of informed consent and user autonomy can undermine user trust and raise ethical concerns about data privacy and user rights.*
- **Dependency and Reliance :** *Users may become overly dependent or reliant on AI chatbots for decision-making, problem-solving, or emotional support, leading to disempowerment and loss of critical thinking skills.*

- *Over-reliance on chatbots may also exacerbate social isolation and diminish human-human interactions.*

### Way forward

*Addressing these ethical concerns requires careful consideration and responsible development of AI chatbots that prioritize fairness, transparency, privacy, security and user autonomy. Ethical guidelines, regulations, and oversight mechanisms can help mitigate ethical risks and ensure that AI chatbots are developed and deployed in ways that respect and uphold ethical principles and human values.*

## **Climatization of forests**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Climate change and forests.**

### Context:

- *A report titled "**International Forest Governance: A Critical Review of Trends, Drawbacks, and New Approaches**" was released during the **19th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF19)** in New York.*
- *It was authored by the **Science-Policy Programme (SciPol)** of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO).*
- *This report is the **first global synthesis on international forest governance** in 14 years.*
- *It highlights a growing **trend called 'climatisation' of forests**, which is something to pay attention to.*

### What is Climatisation of Forests?

- *Climatisation of forests is a trend where **forests are primarily valued for their ability to absorb carbon dioxide**, rather than for their **important ecological and social roles**.*
- *This shift is **driven by political and financial interests** focused on using forests to store carbon to address climate change.*
- *However, this emphasis on carbon sequestration often **overlooks the long-term sustainability of forests** and the fair treatment of communities relying on them for their livelihoods.*

### Risks and Impacts

- **Continued Challenges:** *The report notes that despite efforts to decrease deforestation, problems like climate change, loss of biodiversity, and increasing socio-economic disparities persist.*
- **Commodification Concerns:** *The focus on using forests primarily for carbon capture may worsen existing inequalities and could lead to less effective management of forests.*

### Market-based Versus Non-market Approaches

- **Market-Based Solutions:** *Professor Constance McDermott, a lead author, points out that market-driven solutions such as forest carbon trading and zero-deforestation supply chains are gaining popularity.*
  - *However, the report warns that these approaches might make existing inequalities worse and could have unintended negative effects on sustainable forest management.*
- **Non-Market Approaches:** *As an alternative, the report suggests using non-market methods like government regulations and initiatives led by local communities.*
  - *These methods are seen as offering fairer and more effective ways to govern forests.*

### Policy Recommendations

- **Broader Valuation of Forests:** *Policymakers are urged to recognize the value of forests beyond their role as carbon sinks.*
  - *They should prioritize long-term investments that aim for both sustainability and fairness.*
- **Addressing Power Imbalances:** *The report suggests creating policies that address power disparities among different groups involved in forest management.*
  - *This includes protecting the rights and livelihoods of communities who depend on forest resources.*

### More About Carbon sequestration

- **Carbon Sequestration:** *This is the process of capturing and storing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), a major greenhouse gas causing climate change, from the atmosphere.*
- **Goal:** *The aim of carbon sequestration is to lessen the effects of carbon emissions on global warming.*

### Practice Question

*Q. Discuss the concept of "climatisation of forests" and its implications on global forest governance. (10 marks, 150 words)*