



NEWS ANALYSIS

29 JULY 2024

Today's Prelims Practice Question

Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas' is celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of

- a) Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu**
- b) Birsa Munda**
- c) Rani Gaidinliu**
- d) Alluri Seetha Ram Raju**

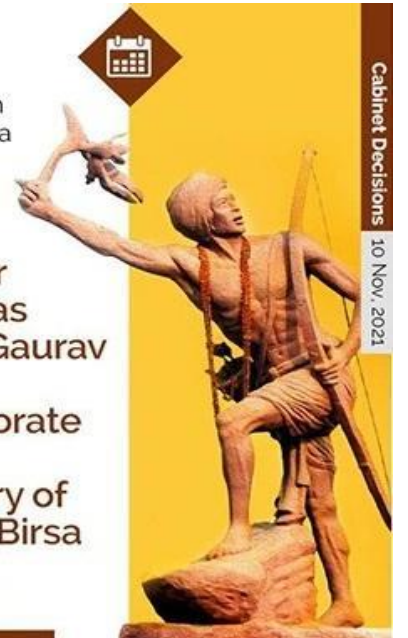
Explanation

- The Janjatiya Gaurav Divas will be celebrated every year to recognize the efforts of the tribals in the preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of Indian values of national pride, valour, and hospitality.
- A **tribal freedom fighter museum at Ranchi** would be inaugurated by the Prime Minister.
- 15th November also marks the birth anniversary of **Birsa Munda** who is revered as God by tribal communities across India.



Honouring the
Tribal Freedom
Fighters of India

15th
November
declared as
Janjatiya Gaurav
Divas to
commemorate
the birth
anniversary of
Bhagwan Birsa
Munda



Today's prelims practice Question

Q) Consider the following statements regarding Godavari River.

1. Godavari is the largest River in peninsular India.
 2. The Godavari River *rises from Trimbakeshwar and drains into Arabian Sea.*
 3. *Purna, Indravati, Musi and Majira are the tributaries of the Godavari River.*
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?*

- a) 1, 2
- b) 1 only
- c) 1, 3
- d) 1, 2, 3

Discuss the significance of natural farming and suggest measures that can be taken for smooth transition from conventional to chemical-free farming.

APPROACH OF THE ANSWER

- 1. Introduce with what is natural farming.**
- 2. Discuss the significance of natural farming.**
- 3. Suggest measures that can be taken for smooth transition from conventional to chemical-free farming.**

Natural Farming is the art, practice and, increasingly, the science of working with nature to achieve much more with less. This practice, however, has been associated with decline in yields and not much improvement in farmers' incomes.

Natural Farming and its Significance -

- ❑ This farming approach was introduced by **Masanobu Fukuoka**, a Japanese farmer and philosopher, in his 1975 book 'The One-Straw Revolution'.
- ❑ It is a diversified farming system that integrates crops, trees and livestock, allowing the optimum use of functional biodiversity.
- ❑ Internationally, Natural Farming is considered a form of regenerative agriculture—a prominent strategy to save the planet.
- ❑ It holds the promise of enhancing farmers' income while delivering many other benefits, such as restoration of soil fertility and environmental health, and mitigating and/or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- ❑ It has the potential to manage land practices and sequester carbon from the atmosphere in soils and plants, where it is actually useful.

Initiatives have been Launched in this Regard

- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**
- Sub-mission on AgroForestry (SMAF)**
- National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**
- Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana**

Measures that can be taken to scale up Natural Farming -

- Going Beyond Ganga Basin:** Focussing on promoting natural farming in rainfed areas beyond the Gangetic basin.
- Rainfed regions use only a third of the fertilisers per hectare compared to the areas where irrigation is prevalent.**
- The shift to chemical-free farming will be easier in these regions.**
- Also, the farmers stand to gain as the current crop yields in these areas are low.**



❑ Risk Prevention for Smooth Transition: Enabling automatic enrollment of farmers transitioning to chemical-free farming into the government's crop insurance scheme, PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).


❑ Any transition in agriculture – crop diversification, change in farming practices – adds to the farmer's risk.

❑ Covering such risks could enhance the appetite of the farmers to embark on the transition.

❑ Providing Support to Agri MSMEs: Microenterprises that produce inputs for chemical-free agriculture shall be provided support from the government.

❑ To address the challenge of unavailability of readily available natural inputs, the promotion of natural farming needs to be combined with the setting up of village-level input preparation and sales shops.

❑ Two shops per village across the country could provide a livelihood to at least five million youth and women.

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- ❑ **Peer Farmers as Inspiration:** NGOs and champion farmers who have been promoting and practising sustainable agriculture across the country can be leveraged for this purpose.
 - ❑ A CEEW (Council on Energy, Environment and Water) research estimates that at least five million farmers are already practising some form of sustainable agriculture and hundreds of NGOs are involved in promoting them.
 - ❑ Learning from peers, especially champion farmers, through on-field demonstrations has proved highly effective in scaling up chemical-free agriculture in Andhra Pradesh.
 - ❑ **Leveraging Community Institutions:** Community institutions can be leveraged for awareness generation, inspiration, and social support.
 - ❑ The government should facilitate an ecosystem in which farmers learn from and support each other while making the transition.
 - ❑ Beyond evolving the curriculum in agricultural universities, there is a need to upskill the agriculture extension workers on sustainable agriculture practices.

On reservations and the OBC creamy layer

On reservations and the OBC creamy layer

What were the recommendations of the Mandal Commission? What is the criteria for exclusion of the 'creamy layer' of the Other Backward Class? Is the concentration of reservation benefits a concern? What can be done for a more equitable distribution?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan, R

The story so far:

The allotment of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) to Puja Khedkar as an Other Backward Class (OBC) Non-Creamy Layer (NCL) candidate coupled with multiple disabilities has raised issues surrounding the creamy layer in OBC reservation.

What is the history of reservation?

Articles 15 and 16 guarantee equality to all citizens in any policy of the government and public employment respectively. In order to achieve social justice, they also enable special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or OBC, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Reservations for SC and ST are fixed at 15% and 7.5% respectively, in jobs, educational institutions and public sector undertakings (PSU) at the central level. It was in 1990, when V. P. Singh was Prime Minister, that 27% reservation for OBC was implemented in central government employment based on Mandal Commission (1980) recommendations. Subsequently in 2005, reservation was enabled for OBC, SC and ST in educational institutions including private institutions. In 2019, 10% reservation was enabled for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among the unreserved category.

What is the creamy layer?

The 27% reservation for OBC was upheld by the Supreme Court in the *Indra Sawhney* case (1992). It opined that caste is a determinant of class in the Indian context. However, in order to uphold the basic structure of equality, it fixed a cap of 50% for reservation unless there are exceptional circumstances. The court also provided for exclusion of creamy layer from OBC.



High stakes: Aspirants look for their roll numbers before the UPSC civil services exam, on June 16. PTI

The criteria for identifying a person as part of the creamy layer is based on the recommendations of the Justice Ram Nandan Prasad Committee (1993). It is determined by the position/income of an applicant's parents alone. The criteria for belonging to creamy layer is parental income, excluding income from salary and agricultural income, being more than ₹8 lakh in each year in the last three consecutive financial years. Further, the following categories of applicants are also considered as belonging to creamy layer: (a) parents, either of whom entered government service (centre or State) as Group A/Class I officer or parents, both of whom entered as Group B/Class II officers or father, who was recruited in Group B/Class II post and promoted to Group A/Class I before 40 years of age; (b) either of the parents employed in a managerial position in PSUs; (c) either of the parents

holding constitutional posts.

What are the issues?

The recent controversy has raised issues surrounding the inadequacies in the process. There are allegations that some applicants manage to obtain NCL or EWS certificate through dubious means. The same may also be true with respect to disability certificates in order to take benefit of the 4% of seats reserved for persons with disabilities in central government jobs. There are also allegations of applicants and their parents adopting strategies to get around the creamy layer exclusion like gifting of assets, taking premature retirement etc., since the applicant's or his/her spouse's income is not considered for such exclusion. Another contentious issue relates to concentration of reservation benefits. The Rohini Commission, that

was set up for providing recommendation on sub-categorisation among OBC castes, has estimated that 97% of reserved jobs and seats in educational institutions have been garnered by just around 25% of the OBC castes/sub-castes at the central level. Close to 1,000 of around 2,600 communities under the OBC category had zero representation in jobs and educational institutions. Similar issue of concentration of reservation benefits persists in the SC and ST category as well. There is neither any exclusion based on 'creamy layer' for these communities. The reservation at present stands at 60%, including the reservation for EWS. Considering societal realities, this higher percentage of reservation is required. It is pertinent to note that as per government replies in Parliament, 40-50% of seats reserved for OBC, SC and ST in the central government remain unfilled.

What can be the way forward?

The foremost requirement is to plug the loopholes in the issue of NCL, EWS and disability certificates. There must be thorough scrutiny to ensure that only eligible applicants obtain these benefits.

The vacancies for reserved communities should be filled without backlogs. Sub-categorisation of reservation may be essential to address the under representation or non-representation of various communities. Similarly, creamy layer exclusion in SC and ST category, at least for children of Group I/Class A government officials may be considered. These are sensitive matters in which for every argument in favour of such a proposal, there are valid counter arguments that can be advanced. Nevertheless, a discussion should begin on these aspects with all stakeholders to implement them. This would ensure that benefits of reservation reach the more marginalised among underprivileged in successive generations.

Rangarajan, R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

Articles 15 and 16 guarantee equality to all citizens in any policy of the government and public employment respectively. In order to achieve social justice, they also enable special provisions for advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or OBC, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

The 27% reservation for OBC was upheld by the Supreme Court in the *Indra Sawhney* case (1992). It opined that caste is a determinant of class in the Indian context.

Sub-categorisation of reservation may be essential to address the under representation or non-representation of various communities.

CONTEXT

- The allotment of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) to Puja Khedkar as an Other Backward Class (OBC) Non-Creamy Layer (NCL) candidate coupled with multiple disabilities has raised issues surrounding the creamy layer in OBC reservation.

The history of reservation

- **Articles 15 and 16** guarantee equality to all citizens in any policy of the government and public employment respectively.
- In order to achieve **social justice**, they also enable special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or OBC, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).
- Reservations for SC and ST are fixed at 15% and 7.5% respectively, in jobs, educational institutions and public sector undertakings (PSU) at the central level.
- In 1990, **27% reservation for OBC** was implemented in central government employment based on Mandal Commission (1980) recommendations.

The debate

- 'Creamy layer' denotes relatively forward, better-educated and socially advanced members of OBCs
- The term was introduced by Sattanathan Commission in 1971, which recommended that 'creamy layer' should be excluded from quota benefits
- In Indira Sawhney judgment (1992), SC directed that 'creamy layer' among OBCs be excluded from quota benefits
- After a constitution bench judgment in 2018, the concept is applicable also to SC/ST communities
- The Centre has defined 'creamy layer' among OBCs as those earning more than ₹8 lakh per annum



- In 2019, 10% reservation was enabled for the **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)** among the unreserved category.

The creamy layer


- The criteria for identifying a person as part of the creamy layer is based on the recommendations of the Justice Ram Nandan Prasad Committee (1993).
- It is determined by the position/income of an applicant's parents alone. The criteria for belonging to creamy layer is parental income, being more than ₹8 lakh in each year in the last three consecutive financial years

S.No	Creamy Layer	Non-creamy layer
1	Income- Above 8 lakh	Income- Below 8 lakh
2	Family income- Above 8 lakh (agriculture income will not include)	Family income- Below 8 lakh (agriculture income will not include)
3	In the case of any competitive exam, you are not eligible to take a relaxation	You enjoy the benefits including age relaxation and competitive exam
4	No requirement for any certificate	For reservation, you need to require to submit an OBC certificate

The issues?

- There are allegations that some applicants manage to obtain NCL or EWS certificate through dubious means. And also with respect to disability certificates in order to take benefit of the **4% of seats reserved for persons with disabilities in central government jobs.**
- There are also allegations of applicants and their parents adopting strategies to get around the creamy layer exclusion like gifting of assets, taking premature retirement etc.,

RESERVATION ISSUE	
➤ Reservation policy applies same to any college/universities all over India	➤ Some of them have minority (muslim, christian and jain) reservations
➤ Central Universities, AIIMS do have same SC/ST/OBC reservation policy	➤ They also have 15% quota for NRI students
➤ Deemed to be universities don't have SC/ST/OBC reservation	➤ Medical students are demanding SC, ST and OBC reservations in Deemed universities



TOI on

- **The Rohini Commission**, that was set up for providing recommendation on sub-categorisation among OBC castes, has estimated that **97% of reserved jobs and seats in educational institutions have been garnered by just around 25%** of the OBC castes/sub-castes at the central level.

WAYFARWARD

- To plug the loopholes in the issue of NCL, EWS and disability certificates. There must be thorough scrutiny to ensure that only eligible applicants obtain these benefits.
- Sub-categorisation of reservation may be essential to address the under representation or non-representation of various communities.
- A discussion should begin on these aspects with all stakeholders to implement them. This would ensure that benefits of reservation reach the more marginalised among underprivileged in successive generations.

Under consideration



The Justice G Rohini Commission's report offers a major departure from the traditional way in which reservation policy is handled. It is divided into two parts

- 1 How the OBC quota should be allocated
- 2 An updated list of all 2,633 OBC castes across India

'Quantum of benefits'
The sub-categorisation is "on the basis of quantum of benefits enjoyed by different communities" as compared to social status and traditional occupation

Set up in 2017: The commission was created in October 2017 to, among other reasons, ensure the benefits of reservation were not restricted to a few dominant OBCs

CITES eases norms for agarwood export

CITES eases norms for agarwood export; move to benefit lakhs of farmers from the Northeast

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

India has successfully prevented the inclusion of agarwood (*Aquilaria malaccensis*) in the Review of Significant Trade (RST) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The CITES also notified a new export quota of the highly valuable and aromatic resinous wood and oil of the tree from India from April 2024.

Since agarwood is cultivated in different parts of India, especially in the northeastern States, this development is going to benefit lakhs of farmers in certain districts of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura.



Agarwood extract is used in the preparation of incense, air fresheners, purifiers as well as medicines. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Aquilaria malaccensis was listed in Appendix II of the CITES (a category of species that are not necessarily threatened but whose trade must be controlled) for the first time in 1995 based on India's proposal at CoP9 in 1994.

The removal of India

from the RST for *Aquilaria malaccensis* was achieved based on a non-detriment findings (NDFs) study of the plant species by the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

The NDF prepared by

the BSI suggested that the harvest of plants should be allowed from home, community gardens, plantations on leased/patta lands, private or community plantations, or any other types of small-scale or large-scale plantations.

However, the NDF added that "harvesting of plants or collection of seeds/seedlings/saplings and other propagules should not be allowed from the existing wild populations or plants in the protected areas and reserve forests".

The export quota recommended by the NDF for 2024-2027 for agarwood chips and powder/sawdust is 1,51,080 kg a year and agarwood oil is 7,050 kg a year.

"The absence of an ex-

port quota for a long period and other trade-related restrictions in India caused an increase in informal trade/export of agar chips, oil, powder etc. to the Middle East and other foreign countries. It also caused an increase in costs of agarwood chips and oil in the global market as India is a major agarwood trading nation with which most importing countries have long trade records," the NDF report said.

Despite the export ban, the illegal trade of agarwood and its derivatives has continued in India, with more than 1.25 tonne of chips and six litres of oil/derivatives reportedly seized in six States between 2017 and 2021, a report by TRAFFIC, an NGO, said.

Context

- India has successfully prevented the inclusion of **agarwood (*Aquilaria malaccensis*)** in the Review of Significant Trade (RST) of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**.
- The CITES also notified a new export quota of the highly valuable and aromatic resinous wood and oil of the tree from India.

- **Agarwood is cultivated in different parts of India, especially in the northeastern States,** this development is going to benefit lakhs of farmers in certain districts of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura.
- Aquilaria malaccensis was listed in **Appendix II of the CITES** (a category of species that are not necessarily threatened but whose trade must be controlled) for the first time in 1995 based on India's proposal at CoP9 in 1994.
- The harvest of plants should be allowed from home, community gardens, plantations on leased/patta lands, private or community plantations, or any other types of small-scale or large-scale plantations.



- “Harvesting of plants or collection of seeds/seedlings/saplings and other propagules should not be allowed from the existing wild populations or plants in the protected areas and reserve forests.”
- “The absence of an export quota for a long period and other trade-related restrictions in India caused an **increase in informal trade/export of agar chips**, oil, powder etc. to the Middle East and other foreign countries.
- It also caused an **increase in costs of agarwood chips and oil in the global market as India** is a major agarwood trading nation with which most importing countries have long trade records.”



CITES

- **CITES was conceptualised in 1963 at a meeting of the (IUCN) International Union For Conservation Of Nature.**
- **It came into force in 1975 and consists of 183 member-countries till date that abide by CITES regulations by implementing legislation within their own borders to enforce those regulations.**
- **Located in Geneva, Switzerland, the CITES is administered by the United Nations under its UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) Wing.**

CITES Classification or CITES Appendix

- **Roughly 5,600 species of animals and 30,000 species of plants are protected by CITES against over-exploitation through international trade.**

Appendix	Description	Examples of Species
CITES Appendix-I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species that are in danger of extinction • Commercial trade is prohibited. • Permits are required for import and export. • Trade permitted just for research only if the origin country ensures the trade won't harm the species' chance of survival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asiatic lions and tigers (tiger skin trade). • Sea turtles, gorillas, lady slippers orchids (most species), etc. • Total 931 species on the list.
CITES Appendix-II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species that aren't facing imminent extinction but need monitoring so that any trade doesn't become a threat. • Trade permits obtained legally and only if the origin country ensures that its harvesting and trade won't harm the species' chance of survival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Alligators (Alligator skin trade) • Paddlefish, Mahogany, corals, etc. • Total 34,419 species on the list.
CITES Appendix-III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species that are protected in at least one country. • Regulations for these species vary, but typically the country that requested the listing can issue export permits, and export from other countries requires a certificate of origin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honeybadger (medicinal or bushmeat purpose) • Walruses, Map turtles, certain beetles, etc. • Total 147 species on the list.

Ethanol used in petrol now more from maize, damaged foodgrains



ETHANOL SUPPLIED TO OIL MARKETING COMPANIES

First time that use of grains in making ethanol has crossed 50%

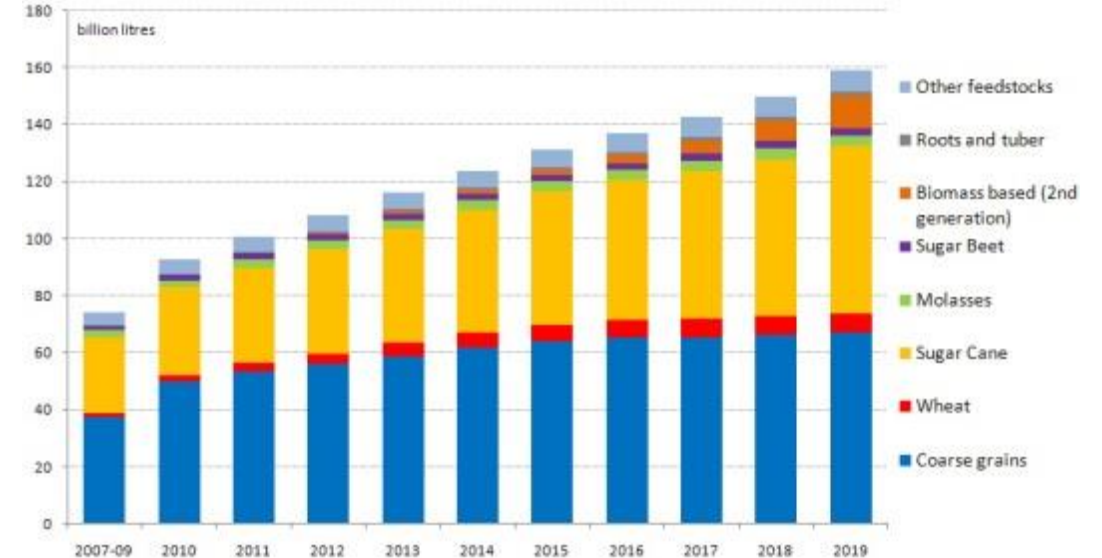
Supply Year	C-Heavy Molasses	B-Heavy Molasses	Sugarcane Juice	Surplus Rice	Damaged Grains	Maize	TOTAL
2013-14	38	0	0	0	0	0	38(1.60)
2014-15	67	0	0	0	0	0	67(2.33)
2015-16	111	0	0	0	0	0	111(3.51)
2016-17	67	0	0	0	0	0	67(2.07)
2017-18	151	0	0	0	0	0	151(4.22)
2018-19	146	33	1	0	10	0	189(4.92)
2019-20	74	68	15	0	16	0	173(5.00)
2020-21	39	183	39	2	39	0	302(8.10)
2021-22	11	265	85	49	24	0	434(10.02)
2022-23	6	235	128	74	32	32	506(12.06)
2023-24*	39	95	56	0	76	135	401(13.00)

Figures in crore litres; Supply years are Dec-Nov, Dec-Oct for 2022-23 and Nov-Oct for 2023-24;

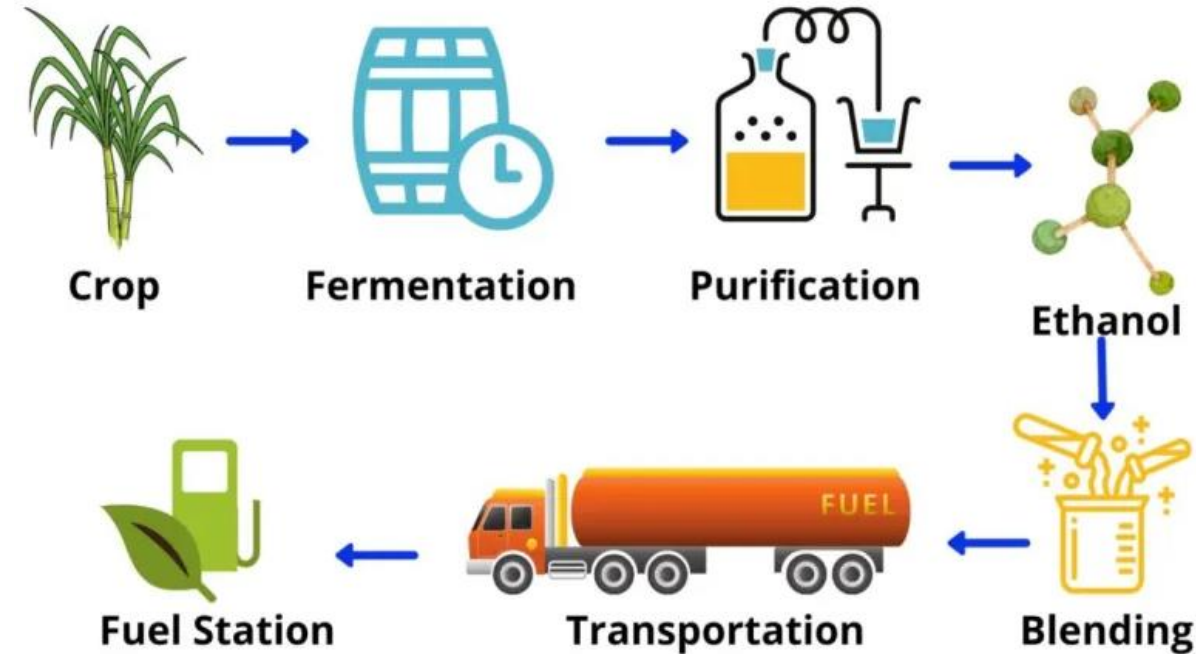
*Nov-June; Figures in brackets are blending percentages.

- sugar mills and distilleries supplied 401 crore litres of ethanol to oil marketing companies till June 30.
- **Of that, 211 crore litres or 52.7% was ethanol produced using maize and damaged foodgrains (mainly broken/ old rice not fit for human consumption), while sugarcane-based feedstocks (molasses and whole juice/ syrup) accounted for the remaining 190 crore litres.**

- The Government of India has been implementing **Ethanol Blended with Petrol (EBP) Programme** throughout the country wherein Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) sell petrol blended with ethanol. Under EBP Programme, **Government has fixed the target of 20% blending of ethanol with petrol by 2025.**
- To achieve the target of 20% blending by 2025, about 1016 crore litres of ethanol is required and total requirement of ethanol including for other uses is 1350 crore litres.
- About 1700 crore liters of ethanol producing capacity is required to be in place by 2025 considering plant operates at 80% efficiency.



- The Government has estimated the demand of ethanol required for 20% blending by 2025 keeping in view the growth of petrol-based vehicles in two-wheeler and passenger vehicle segments & the projected sale of Motor Spirit (MS).
- To enhance the ethanol production capacity in the country to achieve the blending targets set under EBP Programme, **the Government has notified various ethanol interest subvention schemes from July 2018 to April 2022.**
- Under these ethanol interest subvention schemes, Government is facilitating entrepreneurs to set up new distilleries (molasses based, grain-based and dual-feed based) or expansion of existing distilleries (molasses based, grain-based and dual-feed based) throughout the country.



Aiming for an eco boost

Oil industry experts have allayed fears over mixing ethanol with petrol and say it cannot damage engines

- Ethanol is a bio-fuel obtained primarily from sugarcane. Blending of ethanol with petrol reduces dependence on fossil fuel and helps the environment
- The government had set a target of 10% of ethanol per litre of petrol
- Ethanol is blended through a separate pumping and metering mechanism
- Once blended, ethanol cannot be separated from petrol

Since ethanol can absorb moisture from the atmosphere, dealers say it can cause issues with vehicle engines





Thank you

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