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Inaugural Index of Services Production shows 14 sectors grew in double digits in April

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

As many as 14 of the 19 sub-sectors in the trial and inaugural release of the government's new Index of Services Production (ISP) witnessed double-digit growth in April 2026, with the best-performing sectors including accommodation and food, retail trade, administrative and support services, and real estate.

The 19 sub-sectors measured account for about 60% of India's services sector.

The ISP is meant to be the services sector counterpart to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). While the IIP is released on the 28th of every month unless it is a weekend or holiday, the ISP will be released on the 29th henceforth.

Accommodation and food was among best performing sectors.

"The ISP represents an important milestone in strengthening India's statistical system and improving the measurement of the services sector, which accounts for more than half of the country's economic activity," the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation said in a release.

While the inaugural release does not provide a composite growth rate for the entire index, this growth rate can be calculated using the sector-wise growth rates and weightages, said D.K. Srivastava, chief policy advisor at EY India.

"Considering the year-on-year growth in April 2026 over that in April 2025, the 19-services sector growth is at 20.8%," Mr. Srivastava said.

The base year of the trial ISPs has been set as 2024-25, and the index sources its data from several areas, including administrative data, Goods and Services Tax data, and the Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE) data.

In India, in the overall Index of Industrial Production, the Indices of Eight Core Industries have a combined weight of 37·90%. Which of the following are among those Eight Core Industries?

1. Cement
2. Fertilizers
3. Natural gas
4. Refinery products
5. Textiles

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

(a) 1 and 5 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

1. Context (GS-3: Economy): The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has launched the trial Index of Services Production (ISP)—India's first official monthly indicator of services sector output, similar to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

2. Index of Services Production (ISP)
i. What is-it?
Measures monthly real output of the services sector.
ii. Released by
* Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
* Base Year: 2024–25 (Trial Series).
* Release: 29th of every month.
iii. Coverage: Covers 19 service sub-sectors, accounting for ~60% of India's services sector.
iv. Data Sources
* Goods and Services Tax (GST) data.
* Government administrative records.
* Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE).

3. Significance & April 2026 Highlights
i. Importance
* First official high-frequency indicator for services.
* Strengthens economic monitoring and policy formulation.
ii. Key Findings
* 14 of 19 sub-sectors recorded double-digit growth.
* Top performers: Accommodation & Food Services, Retail Trade, Administrative & Support Services, and Real Estate.

'Gold standard' India-U.K. trade deal is coming into effect today

Commerce Secretary describes pact as one of the 'most ambitious and aspirational free trade agreements' signed by the country; he adds that it will benefit farmers, fisherfolk; officials in U.K. welcome deal and highlight its multi-sectoral impact

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and Double Contribution Convention (DCC) that will come into force on Wednesday are a "gold standard" and one of the "most ambitious and aspirational free trade agreements" signed by India, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Tuesday.

He added that the deals benefit India's farmers, fisherfolk, workers and women entrepreneurs. The India-U.K. CETA and the DCC were signed in July last year.

"This is one of the first free trade agreements (FTAs) of its kind, which establishes a future-oriented economic architecture between two major economies of the world," Mr. Agrawal said at a press briefing. "This is also one of the most ambitious and aspirational FTAs of India, which we are operationalising as till date."

"It is a gold standard and the first of its kind because of its wide sectoral coverage and deep reduction in both tariff and non tariff barriers," he added.

Terms of trade

The India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and Double Contribution Convention (DCC) are set to come into force on Wednesday

- Under the CETA, the U.K will immediately eliminate tariffs on **96.8%** of its tariff lines, accounting for **97.7%** of the trade value
- India will immediately eliminate tariffs on **30.3%** of the trade value, with **47%** more seeing tariffs eliminated in a phased manner
- The DCC will exempt Indian workers and their employers from paying social security contributions in the U.K. for **5 years** if contributions are being made in India
- India has protected **sensitive sectors** such as dairy, cereals, pulses, vegetables, gold and jewellery, smartphones, and critical polymers

Under the deal, the U.K. will immediately eliminate tariffs on 96.8% of its tariff lines, accounting for 97.7% of the trade value. An additional 2% of tariff lines, amounting to 1.8% of trade value, will see reduced tariffs based on quotas. In total, this covers 98.8% of tariff lines and 99.5% of trade value.

India, on the other hand, will immediately eliminate tariffs on 30.3% of the trade value, with 47% more seeing tariffs eliminated in a phased manner. It will also provide reduced quota-based tariffs on 12.1% of the trade value. In total, this would cover 89.5% of tariff lines and 89.4% of trade value.

Officials in the U.K. have also welcomed the deal, highlighting a multi-sectoral impact. "For the City of London, the agreement provides a strong platform to unlock even greater collaboration in financial and professional services, insurance, fintech, sustainable finance and infrastructure investment," Chris Hayward, Policy Chairman of the City of London Corporation, told *The Hindu*.

"As India continues its remarkable economic growth story, London stands ready to support the mobilisation of global capital and expertise needed to help deliver those goals," he added.

Mr. Agrawal said that the 30 chapters across which negotiations have taken place under this pact extend beyond conventional tariff liberalisation to cover digital trade, government procurement, SMEs, innovation, labour, environment, and gender.

He added that the deal addresses non-tariff barriers as well, so that issues like Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) "do not become unjustified trade restrictions for our businesses in the future".

He further explained that the deal protects India's sensitive sectors such as dairy, cereals, pulses, vegetables, gold and jewellery, smartphones, and critical polymers.

'Game changer'

On the DCC, he said that the agreement was a "game changer" for India's services sector and skilled workforce. "Indian employees and their employers contribute around 25% of their salary to the U.K.'s national insurance system," he said. "Their contribution is like a tax of 25% as employees are unable to draw benefits. These are like sunk costs."

He said that the DCC will ensure that workers will not need to pay double contributions towards their social security. That is, if they are paying social security in India, then they will not have to pay it in the U.K. as well for a period of five years.

According to Mr. Agrawal, this will benefit over 75,000 Indian workers and over 900 employers.

(With inputs from Sriram Lakshman in London)

INDIA–U.K. COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT (CETA)

CONTEXT

The India – U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Double Contribution Convention (DCC) have come into force on **15 July 2026.** Described as a 'gold standard', it is one of the most ambitious and aspirational FTAs signed by India.

SYLLABUS MAPPING (GS-3)

Indian Economy – External Sector, Trade Policy, Liberalisation, Free Trade Agreements, Investments, Employment, Infrastructure and Economic Growth.

1. CETA: KEY FACTS

- **Parties** : India and United Kingdom
- **Effective from** : 15 July 2026
- **Nature** : Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
- **Coverage** : 30 Chapters

2. MARKET ACCESS & TARIFF LIBERALISATION

UNITED KINGDOM'S COMMITMENTS

- Eliminates tariffs on **96.8%** of tariff lines immediately.
- These account for **97.7%** of India's export value.
- Overall coverage will rise to **98.8%** of tariff lines, accounting for **99.5%** of India's export value.

INDIA'S COMMITMENTS

- Eliminates tariffs on **30.3%** of trade value immediately.
- Tariffs on another **47%** of trade value will be eliminated in a phased manner.
- Reduces tariff rate quotas on **12.1%** of trade value.
- In total, covers **89.5%** of tariff lines and **89.4%** of trade value.

SENSITIVE SECTORS PROTECTED BY INDIA

Dairy | Cereals | Pulses | Vegetables | Gold & Jewellery | Smartphones | Critical Polymers

3. DOUBLE CONTRIBUTION CONVENTION (DCC)

- **What:** Social Security Agreement between India and the U.K.
- **Purpose:** To avoid double payment of social security contributions by Indian workers temporarily working in the U.K.
- **Key Provision:** Indian employees and employers paying social security contributions in India will be exempt from paying National Insurance contributions in the U.K. for **up to 5 years.**
- **Significance:**
  - Acts as a "game changer" for India's services sector.
  - Reduces cost of doing business for Indian companies in the U.K.
  - Expected to benefit over **75,000** Indian professionals and **900+** employers.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AGREEMENT

A. TRADE & INVESTMENT

i. Provides near duty-free access to almost all Indian exports to the U.K. – 96.8% of tariff lines immediately and overall 98.8% coverage – enhancing export competitiveness.

ii. Facilitates greater bilateral trade and investment through a predictable and stable policy framework.

iii. Reduces Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) – including Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) – ensuring smoother market access.

iv. Strengthens integration into Global Value Chains (GVCs) by improving supply chain linkages and reducing trade costs.

B. SERVICES SECTOR

i. Expands opportunities in high-potential sectors such as Information Technology (IT), financial services, fintech, professional services, insurance, business services and other knowledge-based services.

ii. The **Double Contribution Convention (DCC)** exempts eligible Indian professionals and their employers from **paying National** Insurance contributions in the U.K. for **up to five years**, reducing operational costs and enhancing competitiveness of Indian firms.

C. MODERN & FUTURE-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK

i. Includes dedicated chapters on digital trade and e-commerce, government procurement, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), innovation, intellectual property, labour, environment and gender.

ii. Promotes open, transparent and rules-based digital trade including cross-border data flows and paperless trade.

iii. Encourages cooperation on innovation, start-ups and technology transfer, supporting productivity and new jobs.

D. BALANCED & INCLUSIVE LIBERALISATION

i. India has protected sensitive sectors such as dairy, cereals, pulses, vegetables, gold & jewellery, smartphones and critical polymers.

ii. Ensures calibrated and phased liberalisation, balancing the interests of domestic industry, farmers and consumers with the benefits of increased trade.

iii. Supports employment generation and skilling through growth in exports, services and investments.

5. KEY PROVISIONS (COVERED IN 30 CHAPTERS)

- Trade in Goods
- Trade in Services
- Digital Trade & E-commerce
- Investment
- Government Procurement
- MSMEs
- Innovation & Intellectual Property
- Labour, Environment & Gender
- Trade Facilitation & Customs Cooperation

Addresses Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) such as SPS and TBT.

6. WAY FORWARD

- Ensure effective implementation and awareness among exporters, MSMEs and stakeholders.
- Strengthen logistics, quality standards, certification and compliance ecosystem to fully utilise the benefits.
- Build capacity of MSMEs and service providers to compete in the U.K. market.
- Leverage the agreement for innovation, digital economy, green transition and sustainable development.

7. MAINS POINTER

The India – U.K. CETA is a comprehensive, balanced and future-oriented FTA that goes beyond tariff cuts to include investment, services, digital trade, labour, environment and gender. It will enhance market access, protect sensitive sectors, attract investments, support MSMEs and promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth while deepening the India – U.K. economic partnership.

What is meant by 'trial in absentia'?

Who can be tried in absentia under BNSS? What changed under the new criminal law? How does the law protect the accused's right to fair trial? What happens if the accused later appears before the court? Why was trial in absentia introduced?

EXPLAINER

Rizmi Lia M.

The story so far:

A Special NIA Court in Jammu has issued a non-bailable warrant against Hafiz Saeed, the Pakistan-based chief of the proscribed terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), in connection with the investigation into the Pahalgam terror attack. The warrant was issued at the request of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The order was passed by the Special Judge of the NIA Court on July 8, two days after a supplementary chargesheet was filed against Saeed in the Pahalgam terror attack case.

Since Saeed is unlikely to appear before an Indian court, the agency is expected to seek a trial in absentia under Section 356 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). In its supplementary chargesheet, the NIA has charged Hafiz Saeed both in his individual capacity and as the chief of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and its proxy outfit, The Resistance Front (TRF).

"The accused has been charged under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The NIA has also invoked provisions relating to waging war against India and hatching a conspiracy from across the border," the agency said.

What is trial in absentia?

A trial in absentia refers to a criminal trial conducted in the absence of the accused.

Section 356 of the BNSS provides that if a person declared a proclaimed offender has absconded to evade trial and there is no immediate prospect of arrest, the court may treat the accused's absence as a waiver of the right to be present during the proceedings. After recording its reasons in writing, the court may proceed with the inquiry, trial and pronouncement of judgment as if the accused were present.

The law does not permit courts to try every accused person in their absence. It applies only to a "proclaimed offender", as defined under Section 84 of the BNSS. GETTY IMAGES

Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC), the predecessor of BNSS, Section 82(4) of CrPC allows proclamation and attachment of the property of an absconding accused, and Section 317 of CrPC allows the Judge or Magistrate to conduct trial of an accused in his absence in certain specific cases. Section 299 CrPC allows the Judge or Magistrate to record the evidence in absence of absconded accused if there is no prospect of arresting him soon.

Those provisions provide a discretion to a presiding officer to conduct an in-absentia trial only when it feels that, firstly, the personal attendance of the accused before the court is not necessary in the interests of justice, and secondly, the accused persistently disturbs the proceedings in court. But none of those provisions allowed full-fledged trials in absentia. As a result, trials often remained pending for years until the accused was apprehended.

Whom does it apply to?

The law does not permit courts to try every accused person in their absence. It applies only to a "proclaimed offender", as defined under Section 84 of the BNSS.

Under Section 84(4), where a proclamation has been issued against a person accused of an offence punishable with imprisonment of 10 years or more, life imprisonment, or death under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, or any other law, and the person fails to appear at the specified place and time, the court may, after making such inquiry as it considers necessary, declare the person a proclaimed offender.

Thus, trial in absentia is available only in cases involving serious offences punishable with imprisonment of at least 10 years, life imprisonment, or death, where the accused has been declared a proclaimed offender.

What are the procedural safeguards under Section 356?

Section 356 lays down several procedural safeguards before a trial can commence in the absence of the accused. These include the issuance of two consecutive warrants of arrest within an interval of at least 30 days. A notice must also be published in a local or national newspaper, giving the accused 30 days to appear before the court. In addition, the notice must be displayed at the accused's last known place of residence, and a relative or friend of the accused must be informed about the trial.

The trial cannot commence until 90 days have elapsed from the date of framing of charges, giving the accused sufficient opportunity to appear before the court. If the absconding accused does not have legal representation, the court must appoint a defence lawyer at the State's expense to safeguard the accused's right to a fair trial.

Statements of prosecution witnesses recorded before the commencement of the trial may be used as evidence against the absconding accused. However, if the accused later appears or is apprehended, the court may permit cross-examination of witnesses in the interest of justice.

The deposition and examination of witnesses may, as far as practicable, be recorded through audiovisual electronic means. Such recordings must be preserved to ensure transparency, accuracy and the integrity of the trial process, and to facilitate review if the accused is subsequently apprehended.

THE GIST

Section 356 of the BNSS provides that if a person declared a proclaimed offender has absconded to evade trial and there is no immediate prospect of arrest, the court may treat the accused's absence as a waiver of the right to be present during the proceedings.

If the accused later appears or is apprehended, the court may allow cross-examination of witnesses in the interest of justice. Witness testimony can also be recorded through audiovisual means and preserved for future review.

1. **Context (GS-2: Governance | Criminal Justice Reforms):** Following the Pahalgam terror attack, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) may seek a trial in absentia against Hafiz Saeed under Section 356 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, as he is absconding and unlikely to appear before an Indian court.

2. **Trial in Absentia**
i. **Meaning**: Criminal trial conducted without the physical presence of the accused.
ii. **Legal Provision:** Section 356, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.
iii. **Applicability**
* Only against a Proclaimed Offender (Section 84, BNSS).
* Applicable for offences punishable with ≥10 years' imprisonment, life imprisonment or death.

3. **Procedure & Safeguards**
Before Trial
* Two arrest warrants (minimum 30 days apart).
* Public notice in newspaper and at the last known residence.
* Relative/friend informed.
* Trial starts only after 90 days from framing of charges.

4. **Significance**
i. Prevents fugitives from frustrating the criminal justice process.
ii. Ensures speedy trial in terrorism and other grave offences.
iii. Balances efficient justice with natural justice through statutory safeguards.

India-U.S. defence tech ties — big ambitions, little delivery

Rahul Bedi

Defence reporter and analyst based in New Delhi and Chandigarh

India-United States defence cooperation has acquired an unenviable reputation in strategic circles for generating ambitious political announcements that fail to translate into industrial outcomes. Over the past two decades, successive administrations in New Delhi and Washington have unveiled defence technology partnerships and industrial collaborations promising to transform bilateral military ties, only for them to become bogged down in protracted negotiations, export-control restrictions, technology-transfer disputes and differing commercial expectations.

The irony is that the relationship itself has expanded considerably. Since 2002, India has acquired over $22 billion worth of U.S. defence equipment, including Apache and Chinook helicopters, C-17 and C-130J transport aircraft, P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, and M777 howitzers. While the US has become a major defence supplier, meaningful co-production and technology transfer remain elusive.

The case of the GE engine

The recent impasse over General Electric's (GE) F414 fighter engine, once hailed as the centrepiece of bilateral defence cooperation, is merely the latest – and arguably the most significant – illustration of the gap between political declarations and industrial outcomes. The estimated cost of each F414 engine has reportedly nearly tripled, rising from around ₹70 crore-80 crore to over ₹200 crore. GE has also sought an Indian investment of around $800 million (₹7,576 crore) to establish a dedicated production line.

Disagreements over technology transfer, intellectual property and export controls have further complicated negotiations. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited is negotiating procurement and licensed manufacture of the F414 for the Tejas Mk-II, while the Defence Research and Development Organisation and Aeronautical Development Agency are separately engaging GE over the same engine for the proposed Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and the Indian Navy's Twin-Engine Deck-Based Fighter. The result is a web of interlinked negotiations proving difficult to resolve.

The F414 programme was unveiled during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2023 Washington visit as the flagship achievement of the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), intended to symbolise a shift from a buyer-seller relationship towards genuine defence-industrial collaboration. Instead, it has become another illustration of the enduring gap between political ambition and industrial reality. Nor is this an isolated instance.

> Meaningful defence technology collaboration continues to elude the United States and India

Vision to stagnation

The first serious attempt to institutionalise defence cooperation came in 2012 with the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). Conceived to promote co-development and co-production, it generated years of meetings but delivered no significant military capability before fading into irrelevance.

Its successor, iCET (2022), expanded the agenda to semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, telecommunications, space, biotechnology, drones and resilient supply chains. Among its principal defence initiatives was the GE F414 programme, whose unresolved negotiations have become emblematic of the wider difficulty in translating political ambition into industrial outcomes.

The India-United States Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X), launched in 2023 to link defence start-ups, academia and industry, likewise generated enthusiasm but has yet to produce noteworthy co-development outcomes. Other prospective collaborations have fared little better. Discussions on co-producing the Javelin anti-tank guided missile have remained unresolved for more than a decade, while the proposed collaboration on the General Dynamics Stryker infantry combat vehicle has suffered a similar fate. Both now appear increasingly likely to be shelved quietly.

Even India's 2024 acquisition of 31 MQ-9B SkyGuardian and SeaGuardian remotely piloted aircraft from General Atomics through the U.S. government's Foreign Military Sales route for around $3.5 billion has resembled a purchase rather than the industrial collaboration originally envisaged. Its promised package – including local assembly, partial manufacture and a domestic maintenance, repair and overhaul ecosystem – has yet to materialise.

Taken together, these outcomes reveal a pattern that is difficult to ignore. Successive India-U.S. defence initiatives have been heralded as "historic", "transformational" or "game-changing", yet implementation has repeatedly fallen well short of the rhetoric.

The technology transfer divide

At the heart of this disconnect lie fundamentally different philosophies underpinning the two countries' defence sectors. India views defence partnerships as a means of acquiring advanced technologies, strengthening indigenous manufacturing and reducing dependence on imported matériel.

The U.S., by contrast, regards advanced defence technologies as strategic assets governed by stringent export-control regulations, particularly the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), under which the release of technical data and manufacturing know-how remains subordinate to broader security considerations.

The unresolved F414 negotiations illustrate this divide. India has sought manufacturing expertise and intellectual property to build long-term domestic capability, while the U.S. remains constrained by export-control regimes regardless of Washington's broader strategic objectives. The consequence is a defence relationship that has matured as a procurement partnership but far less as a mechanism for transferring capability and strengthening India's atmanirbharta.

Despite the undeniable expansion of India-U.S. strategic ties – marked by increasingly sophisticated military exercises, logistics agreements and enhanced interoperability – the industrial dimension of the relationship has yet to keep pace. The alphabet soup of DTTI, iCET and INDUS-X has largely disappointed, leaving officials in both countries looking to the proposed Reciprocal Defence Procurement Agreement (RDPA) as the next test of industrial cooperation.

The U.S. believes that the RDPA could reshape bilateral defence trade by granting reciprocal access to each other's procurement markets. Yet, that reciprocity could expose India's still-nascent defence manufacturers to direct competition with America's larger, wealthier and technologically more advanced defence giants. Whether this creates genuine balance or simply institutionalises unequal competition is another matter altogether.

1. Context: Despite over US$22 billion in U.S. defence acquisitions since 2002 and several bilateral initiatives, India–U.S. defence technology cooperation has not translated into meaningful technology transfer or defence industrial collaboration.

2. Why has defence technology cooperation lagged?
i. U.S. export-control regime: Strict International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) limit transfer of critical defence technologies.
ii. Divergent priorities
India: Technology transfer, co-development and Atmanirbhar Bharat.
U.S.: Strategic partnership while protecting advanced technologies.
iii. Commercial & Intellectual Property (IP) issues
* Differences over pricing, licensing, manufacturing rights and IP have delayed projects.
3. Major Initiatives & Status
i. Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), 2012
* Promoted co-development and co-production.
* Limited tangible outcomes.
ii. Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), 2022
* Covers Artificial Intelligence (AI), semiconductors, quantum technologies, space, biotechnology, telecommunications and resilient supply chains.
* Industrial outcomes remain limited.
iii. India–United States Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X), 2023
* Links defence start-ups, industry and academia.
* No major co-development project delivered yet.
iv. GE F-414 Engine Deal: Delayed due to disagreements over technology transfer, intellectual property, investment and production arrangements.

4. Way Forward
i. Shift from buyer–seller to co-development and co-production.
ii. Create predictable frameworks for technology transfer and intellectual property sharing.
iii. Fast-track flagship projects (e.g., GE F-414 engine) to build confidence.
iv. Deliver measurable outcomes under iCET and INDUS-X.

Union govt. bans herbicide paraquat

Serish Nanisetti
HYDERABAD

The Centre has notified a ban on paraquat dichloride, a herbicide linked to thousands of deaths due to self-harm, homicides, and accidental deaths in India.

The notice by the Union Ministry of Agriculture comes on the back of bans by various States, including most recently by Andhra Pradesh, and earlier by Telangana and Kerala.

Paraquat dichloride is used by farmers after the harvest to clean up the land for the next crop.

"This is a welcome development. Had the decision been taken a decade earlier, we would not have lost so many farmers and young people to self-harm," said Marri Mahesh Reddy, a doctor from Telangana who campaigned for a ban under Doctors Against Paraquat. The chemical has no antidote.

1. Context: The Centre has banned Paraquat Dichloride, a highly toxic herbicide linked to suicides, accidental poisoning and occupational deaths, following similar bans by several States.

2. Paraquat

i. What is it?

* A non-selective contact herbicide used to kill weeds before sowing the next crop.

ii. Contact herbicide means

* Kills only the plant parts it directly touches; it is not transported throughout the plant (unlike systemic herbicides).

iii. Why banned?

* Highly toxic, no antidote, high fatality on poisoning.

3. Significance

i. Reduces poisoning-related deaths.

ii. Protects farmers and farm workers.

iii. Promotes safer weed-management practices.