

# Horticulture output set to hit 362mt in 2024-25, up 2%

**New Delhi:** Horticulture production in India during the 2024-25 crop year is estimated to be 362 million tonnes, which is 2% higher than the output in 2023-24, shows the agriculture ministry data released on Thursday. The higher output in the current year is expected despite marginally lower acreage in 2024-25 compared to the previous year.

Fruits, vegetables, flowers, plantation produce and spices are part of the horticulture basket. Output of all these produce put together was around

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355 million hectares in 2023-24.

Vegetable production in 2024-25 is estimated to be 214 million tonnes, which is nearly seven million tonnes higher than its output in the previous year. Among vegetables, production of key kitchen staples — tomato, onion and potato — is estimated to be higher in 2024-25, compared to 2023-24.

As far as fruits are concerned, their output is estimated at 113 million tonnes in 2024-25, which is around 2.5 lakh tonnes higher than its production in 2023-24. Higher output of fruits is attributed to increased production of mango, grape and banana during the current year. TNN

# Israel tells military to draft plan for Gazans who want to leave

## Def Min Says Tel Aviv's Critics Spain & Norway Obligated To Take Them In

The Israeli defence minister said Thursday that he had ordered Israel's military to draft a plan to allow Palestinians to voluntarily leave the Gaza Strip, a move that comes after President Trump's proposal for a massive resettlement of Palestinians and a US-led takeover of the territory.

It was far from clear whether the proposal would be carried out, where the Israeli authorities hoped the Palestinians would go, or how many people they imagined would leave.

But Israel Katz, the defence minister, praised Trump's initiative, saying it could "allow a large population in Gaza to leave for various places in the world." Katz said his plan for Palestinians to leave Gaza would include "exit options via land crossings, as well as special arrangements for departure by sea and air". He made no mention of whether they would be allowed to come back home after the war.

On Tuesday evening, Trump argued that the roughly 2 million Palestinians in Gaza should leave during a joint news conference with visiting Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu. He also proposed that the US "take over" and "own" Gaza, although administration officials later tried to soften his comments insisting that he had not committed to using US troops to clear the territory and that any relocation of Palestinians would be temporary.

The plan has evoked furious opposition across much of



**'NOT UP FOR REAL ESTATE':** In devastated Gaza, many vowed to remain. Displacement of Palestinians is one of the most sensitive issues in West Asia. Coerced displacement under military occupation is a war crime

## Trump: Israel would 'hand over' Gaza to US, no troops needed

US President Trump said on Thursday that Israel would hand over Gaza to the US after fighting was over and the enclave's population was already resettled elsewhere, which he said meant no US troops would be needed on the ground.

Trump's proposal was not vetted by the president's top advisers and some of Trump's aides had sought to soften the president's ideas on Wednesday. But in an early morning social media post, Trump doubled down, saying that the US and its partners were prepared to build "one of the greatest and most spectacular developments" on the planet in Gaza once Israel ceded control there.



"Gaza would be turned over to the US by Israel at the conclusion of fighting," Trump wrote on Truth Social, adding that Palestinians "would have already been resettled in far safer

and more beautiful communities, with new and modern homes, in the region." Addressing concerns about sending troops to Gaza, Trump insisted that there would be no need for US soldiers to deploy there: "No soldiers by the US would be needed! Stability for the region would reign!!!"

The developments add to a swirl of confusion over the proposal by Trump to "take over" Gaza and for the roughly 2 million Palestinians living there to move elsewhere. REUTERS

the world. Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia rejected the plan outright and Jordan's King Abdullah, who will meet Trump at White House next week, said Wednesday he rejected any attempts to annex land and displace Palestinians. Egypt has launched a diplomatic blitz behind the scenes against the proposal, warning it would put its peace deal with Israel at risk, officials said.

In devastated Gaza, many vowed to remain. "We will not sell our land for you, real estate developer. We are hungry, homeless, and desperate but we are not collaborators," said Abdel Ghani, a father of four living in the ruins of their home.

But Trump's statements have already prompted celebrations among Israel's far-right, many of whom have long promulgated so-called "voluntary emigration" as a solution. During an interview with Fox News late Wednesday, Netanyahu said Palestinians could "relocate and come back" if necessary. "The actual idea of allowing Gazans who want to leave to leave — I mean, what's wrong with that? They can leave, they can then come back."

Katz argued that nations like Spain and Norway, which have been critical of Israel's conduct of the war in Gaza, were obligated to take them in or else "their hypocrisy would be exposed." Jose Manuel Albares, Spain's foreign minister, shot down the idea. "Gazans' land is Gaza. Gaza must be part of the future Palestinian state." NYT

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# Ahead of PM-Trump meet, India, US eye 'ambitious' def ties

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Ahead of PM Narendra Modi's summit with President Donald Trump next week, India and the US on Thursday agreed to chart out an "ambitious" defence cooperation agenda, which includes stepped-up operational, intelligence, logistics and defence-industrial collaboration.

This was discussed in a telephonic conversation between defence minister Rajnath Singh and his US counterpart Pete Hegseth, during which the two reviewed the extensive defence cooperation activities covering multiple domains in land, air, maritime and space.

"They appreciated the ongoing expansion of the bilateral defence partnership and reaffirmed their commitment to deepen ties. In particular, the two decided to work together on technology cooperation, integration of defence-industrial supply chains, enhanced interoperability, logistics and information sharing and



The agenda includes stepped-up operational, intelligence and defence-industrial collaboration

joint military exercises," an official said.

"They also agreed to provide enhanced support to the growing defence innovation collaboration between the two govts, start-ups, businesses and academic institutions," he added.

The two countries agreed to work together to draft a comprehensive framework on defence cooperation, aimed at structuring the bilateral collaboration for 2025-2035. The Trump administration is already pushing for India to ink more defence deals.

Since 2007, US has bagged lucrative Indian defence deals worth over \$25 billion.

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## Nurse puts glue on boy's wound to avert 'ugly scar', is suspended

**Haveri:** A nurse at Aduru tight bandage. The 36-year-old nurse's unconventional ap-

5-year-old man  
in Billawar

# China cries foul over nations' DeepSeek curbs

After several countries, including India, clamped restrictions on officials accessing the newly-released Chinese AI tool DeepSeek, China on Thursday said such actions amounted to politicisation of trade and tech issues and vowed to protect the interests of its firms. China has all along opposed moves to overstretch the concept of national security or politicise trade and tech issues, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing in Beijing. **P 22**

# Govt scraps deals for 400 def drones with Chinese parts

## Were Primarily Meant For LAC Deployment

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**New Delhi:** Cracking the whip on domestic private sector companies that are using Chinese components in drones being supplied to the armed forces, the defence establishment has now scrapped three contracts for the induction of 400 logistics drones by the Army.

The defence establishment is also putting a "stringent mechanism" in place to ensure the military drones being acquired do not have "any Chinese parts or electronics as well as malicious codes", sources told **TOI**.

The contracts that have been scrapped for 200 medium-altitude, 100 heavy-weight and 100 light-weight logistics drones, collectively



Three contracts worth Rs 230 crore were junked over cybersecurity threat, with the possibility of data security and operations being compromised

worth over Rs 230 crore, were inked with a Chennai-based company under emergency procurement provisions by the Army in 2023.

These drones were primarily meant for deployment along the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control with China, following the military confrontation that erupted in April 2020 after the People's Liberation Army made multiple incursions into eastern Ladakh.

"Unfortunately, some Indian companies are using Chinese components and electronics in the drones they are producing for the armed

forces. This is a major cybersecurity threat, with the possibility of data security and operations being compromised," a source said.

"An adversary can seize control of a drone or 'soft kill' it through jamming. There may be a 'backdoor' in the electronics that bypasses security protection measures," he added.

All this has gained urgency after some cases of operational failures in the deployment of UAVs for tactical ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) missions along the borders with China and Pakistan.

In Aug last year, an infan-

try unit deployed along the Line of Control in the Rajouri sector inexplicably lost control of a fixed-wing VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) UAV, which then veered into Pakistan-occupied J&K.

"An investigation was conducted into the incident. The drone-manufacturer was also called for it. It seems there was some technical glitch in the drone. The Army is using over 180 of these drones and the feedback about them is generally positive. The incident in Aug could be an aberration," another source said.

Nevertheless, the defence establishment—Army has increased the level of checks during procurement, with more comprehensive certifications to be provided by drone-manufacturers.

The defence ministry's department of defence production has asked FICCI, CII, and Assocham to "sensitise and caution" their members against procuring Chinese components for drones and related equipment.