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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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ALL INDIA RADIO

Jan 22

PM RASHTRIYA BAL PURASKAR

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Gov policies and Awards)

President Droupadi Murmu confers Rashtriya Bal Puraskar to 19 children; calls for adopting environment friendly lifestyle to improve their future

Context: Recently, President of India conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar, 2024, upon nineteen exceptional children in New Delhi.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

- **About**: It is a prestigious award presented by the Government of India to recognize outstanding achievements of children and individuals or institutions contributing to child welfare.
- **Categories**: Bal Shakti Puraskar and Bal Kalyan Puraskar.

Bal Shakti Puraskar

- **About:** This category acknowledges exceptional accomplishments of children aged 5-18 in diverse fields such as innovation, scholastic achievements, social service, arts & culture, sports, and bravery.
- **Eligibility:** To be eligible, a child must be an Indian citizen residing in India and fall within the age range of 5-18 years.
- **Award**: Recipients of the Bal Shakti Puraskar receive a medal, a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000, book vouchers worth Rs. 10,000, along with a certificate and citation. The award was instituted in 1996 as the National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement, later renamed Bal Shakti Puraskar in 2018.

Bal Kalyan Puraskar

- **About**: This category recognizes individuals and institutions for their outstanding contributions in the areas of child development, child protection, and child welfare.
- **Eligibility**: For individuals, residing in India, and having worked for the cause of children for a minimum of 7 years, with an age requirement of 18 years or above. Institutions should have been actively involved in child welfare for 10 years and should not be entirely funded by the government.
- **Award**: Bal Kalyan Puraskar grants three awards in each category - Individual and Institution - accompanied by cash prizes (Rs. 1,00,000 and Rs. 5,00,000, respectively). The recognized institutions must have consistently performed in the field of child welfare.

THE HINDU Page 12

KUMKI ELEPHANTS
(Syllabus GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Odisha govt. seeks urgent deployment of *kumki* elephants from Tamil Nadu

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has sought assistance of Tamil Nadu for making *kumki* elephants and mahouts available in the wake of worsening human-elephant conflict in the eastern State.

Odisha's Additional Chief Secretary (Forest and Environment) Satyabrata Sahu wrote a letter to his Tamil Nadu counterpart, Supriya Sahu, Additional Chief Secretary (Environment, Climate Change and Forest), stating: "In recent years, we have been facing significant challenges in mitigating human-elephant conflicts. Your help in getting trained *kumki* elephants would greatly assist us in addressing these conflicts effectively and humanely."



Skilled work: An elephant being escorted to a truck using a kumki near Pollachi in Tamil Nadu in July 2023. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

In Odisha, there have been 230 encounters between humans and elephants in the financial year 2023-24.

High casualty number

In these encounters, 139 humans had been killed and 108 injured. Last financial year, there were 257 encounters in which 146 persons had been killed and 157 injured. As there are two more months left in the current financial year, the human casualties in elephant attacks could be an all-time high.

"*Kumki* elephants can be deployed strategically to help us to manage and drive wild elephants thereby reducing damage to crops, human habitations and the potential loss of both human and elephant lives. These elephants can also be deployed for forest patrolling and rescue operations," said the Odisha government officer.

T.N. model

Stating that Tamil Nadu has a successful and commendable programme in place, whereby *kumki* elephants are trained and utilised for wildlife conservation purposes, he requested the Tamil Nadu government to provide at least four *kumki* elephants for deployment in conflict-prone areas of Odisha.

"These elephants will serve as an invaluable asset to our State's wildlife organisation, aiding our efforts to minimise conflicts and safeguard both human and wildlife interests.

It is also requested that the mahouts taking care of those *kumki* elephants may also be deputed along with the elephants, for only initial handholding support to our local mahouts to get them acquainted with those *kumki* elephants," Mr. Sahu mentioned in the letter.

"In light of urgency and magnitude of the human-elephant conflict issue in Odisha, I would request your prompt consideration of this proposal. Your support will significantly contribute to our ongoing conservation efforts and prove instrumental in mitigating wildlife conflicts in Odisha," he further said in the letter.

Context: The Odisha government has sought assistance of Tamil Nadu for making **kumki elephants and mahouts** available in the wake of worsening humanelephant conflict in the eastern State.

Kumki Elephants

- **About**: It is an elephant specially trained to assist in training other elephants and perform specific tasks requiring exceptional control from its Mahout.
- **Geographical Presence**: Famous Kumkies are predominantly found in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, India.
- **Elephant-Human-Conflict:** Kumkies are utilized in HEC situations to deter wild elephants, preventing further problems for the local human population.
- **Role in Elephant Training in South India**: Kumkies are involved in the initial training phase of freshly caught wild elephants in South India. They are often tethered to the new elephants, guiding them during their first walking training outside the Kraal.
- **During Training**: Kumkis may administer mild punishments if the semi-wild elephant **attempts to attack a Mahout**. They also intervene by pushing the new elephant and providing clear signals to discourage resistance.
- **Mahouts of Kumkis**: The Mahouts of Kumkis are equally renowned for their ability to maintain control over the elephants. They play a significant role in bringing other elephants to the level of Kumkies through effective training and management.

PIB

Jan 22

PRADHAN MANTRI SURYODAYA YOJANA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env & Ecology)

1 crore households to get rooftop solar under Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana

Context: The Prime Minister of India has announced 'Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana.

Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana

- **About**: The solar power installation scheme focuses on implementing solar power systems on residential rooftops.
- **Aim**: To reduce electricity costs for both the "poor and middle class" while contributing to India's energy self-reliance.
- **Focus**: Scheme would help not only reduce electricity bills of the “poor and middle class”, but also push India’s goal of becoming self-reliant in the energy sector.

India's Solar Capacity

- **Total Solar Capacity**: As of December 2023, India's total solar capacity stands at 73.31 GW.
- **Rooftop Solar Capacity**: Reported at 11.08 GW, with Gujarat leading at 2.8 GW and Maharashtra following with 1.7 GW.
- **State-wise Distribution**: Rajasthan leads in total solar capacity with 18.7 GW, while Gujarat tops the rooftop solar capacity chart with 2.8 GW.
- **Solar's Contribution to Renewable Energy**: Solar power constitutes a significant share, contributing to the country's total renewable energy capacity of around 180 GW.

Rooftop Solar Programme

- **About**: Commencing in 2014, the Rooftop Solar Programme focuses on augmenting rooftop solar capacity in the residential sector.
- **Objectives**: The scheme offers Central Financial Assistance and incentives to DISCOMs, aiming to achieve 40 GW of rooftop solar capacity by March 2026.
- **Progress**: Since its launch, the programme has elevated rooftop solar capacity from 1.8 GW (March 2019) to 10.4 GW (November 2023), showcasing notable success in its second phase.

LIVEMINT

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IOM
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)



UN agency seeks $7.9 billion to help migrants, host nations

IOM hopes for funding from individual and pvt-sector donors in addition to govts

AP
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GENEVA

The UN's migration agency is launching its first "global appeal," seeking $7.9 billion to help people on the move and ensure smoother pathways to migration, at a time when the fallout from climate change, conflict and both economic distress and opportunities has caused millions to leave their homes.

The annual appeal from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) puts the Geneva-based agency more in the hunt for aid funds, along with other UN agencies and humanitarian groups, at a time when many top donor governments face tight budgets or are reducing aid outlays.

The UN humanitarian aid chief, Martin Griffiths, last month decried a "severe and ominous funding crisis" and said the overall $37 billion appeal from his UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs last year was only about one-third funded, making it the worst funding shortfall in years. His agency is seeking $46 billion this year.

IOM says it hopes funding for its appeal will come from individual and private-sector donors in addition to governments.

It's part of a five-year strategic plan under IOM's new director-general, Amy Pope, and would benefit 140 million people—both migrants and the communities that take them in.

"Irregular and forced migration have reached unprecedented levels and the challenges we face are increasingly complex," Pope said. "The evidence is overwhelming that migration, when well-managed, is a major contributor to global prosperity and progress."

Speaking to reporters in Geneva on Monday, she said agencies like hers should be planning for future migration rather than simply reacting to waves of migration when they happen.

"The evidence shows us that only being reactive means that more people are dying and being exploited as they migrate. This appeal will allow us to save more lives and work together more responsibly," she said.

The agency plays up the promise of migration—reporting that some 281 million international migrants, ranging from manual labourers to white-collar job-holders, generate nearly 10% of global economic output.

It's part of a 5-year plan under IOM's new DG, Amy Pope, & would benefit 140 mn people—both migrants and the communities that take them in

Context: The UN's migration agency is launching its first "global appeal," seeking $7.9 billion to help people on the move and ensure smoother pathways to migration.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- **About**: It is part of the United Nations System as the leading inter-governmental organization.
- **Established in**: 1951
- **Members**: 175 member states and a presence in 171 countries.
- **Objective**: To help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration to promote international cooperation on migration issues.
- IOM works in the four broad areas of migration management:
    - Migration and development
    - Facilitating migration
    - Regulating migration
    - Forced migration.
- **Organizational Structure**: Administrative centers, Regional offices, Country offices.

ALL INDIA RADIO

Jan 22

LEFT WING EXTREMISM

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Internal Security)

Union Minister Amit Shah reviews situation of Left Wing Extremism in Chhattisgarh at high-level meeting in Raipur

Context: Recently, the Union Home Minister of India chaired a review meeting of the Left Wing Extremists situation in Chhattisgarh at Raipur.

Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)

- **About:** Left-wing extremists, known globally as Maoists and in India as Naxalites/Naxalism, have posed a significant threat to India since the 1960s.
- **Geographical Spread**: 46 Districts affected in 2011
- **Origin of Naxalism**: The origins of the LWE date back to 1967, specifically in Naxalbari, Phansidewa, and Khoribari within West Bengal's Darjeeling District.
- **Leadership**: The initial uprising was spearheaded by prominent figures such as Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal, and Jangal Santhal, all of whom were affiliated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist).
- **Peasant Revolt**: The formative stage of the LWE movement manifested as a peasant revolt, reflecting the socio-economic concerns that fueled its inception.
- **Historical Roots**: The roots of LWE in India can be traced back to the Telangana peasant rebellion, which occurred from 1946 to 1951.
- However, the movement gained prominence in 1967 when peasants, landless laborers, and Adivasis (tribal people) raided a landlord's granaries in Naxalbari, West Bengal.

Government Initiatives To Fight LWE

- **Operation Green Hunt**: It was started in 2009-10 and massive deployment of security forces was done in the Naxal-affected areas
- **Aspirational Districts Programme**: Launched in 2018, it aims to rapidly transform the districts that have shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas.
- **SAMADHAN:** Doctrine is the one-stop solution for the LWE problem. It encompasses the entire strategy of government from short-term policy to long-term policy formulated at different levels.

PIB Jan 22

EXERCISE KHANJAR
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

INDIAN – KYRGYZSTAN JOINT SPECIAL FORCES EXERCISE KHANJAR COMMENCES IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Context: The 11th edition of India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR has commenced at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.

Exercise KHANJAR

- **About:** It is an annual event conducted alternatively in both the countries.
- **Started from**: 2011
- **Aim**: To exchange experiences and best practices in Counter Terrorism and Special Forces Operations in Built-up Area and Mountainous Terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter.
- **Objective**: The exercise will provide an opportunity for both the sides of fortify defence ties while addressing common concerns of international terrorism and extremism.
- The exercise will also accord opportunity to showcase capabilities of cutting edge indigenous defence equipment besides achieving shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations.

Kyrgyzstan

- **About:** It is a landlocked country in Central Asia.
- **Borders share with**: Kazakhstan, China, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- **Capital**: Bishkek.
- **International Alliances**: It is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a military alliance led by Russia.
- **Multilateral Affiliations**: Kyrgyzstan holds membership in several international organizations, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eurasian Economic Union, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and the United Nations.

TIMES OF INDIA

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GREENWASHING
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)



Govt seeks to check ads with false environmental claims

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Consumer affairs department will issue guidelines to prevent deceptive or unsubstantiated environmental claims by brands in advertising, known as 'greenwashing', in the next 3-4 weeks, an official said.

"Since consumers pay a premium believing that the products they use are environment friendly or cause less damage to the environment. So, the claims must be backed by verifiable evidence. We will notify the guidelines after incorporating feedback from all stakeholders," the official added.

Recently, the department came out with draft guidelines following a meeting chaired by Union consumer affairs secretary Rohit Kumar Singh. As per the draft norms, claims that compare one product or service to another must be based on verifiable data. This must be disclosed to the consumers.

NO 'GREENWASHING'

The proposed norms say any person or company making environmental claim should specify whether it refers to goods, manufacturing, packaging, manner of use, or disposal; or service or process of rendering the service. Moreover, specific claims must be supported by credible certification, reliable scientific evidence, and independent third-party verification to maintain authenticity.

"It also provides that no person to whom these norms apply shall engage in greenwashing and vague terms such as ecofriendly, cruelty-free, and similar assertions shall not be used without disclosures," the official said.

Context: Consumer af fairs department will issue guidelines to prevent decep- tive or unsubstantiated envi- ronmental claims by brands in advertising, known as 'greenwashing', in the next 3-4 weeks.

GreenWashing

- **About**: It is the deceptive practice of providing false information or creating a misleading impression about a company's products and their environmental impact.
- **Unsubstantiated Claims**: Companies engage in greenwashing by making unsupported claims, deceiving consumers into believing their products are environmentally friendly or have a more positive impact than is accurate.
- **Tactics of Greenwashing**: Employing environmental imagery, misleading labels, and concealing tradeoffs are common tactics in greenwashing, drawing parallels to the concept of "whitewashing."
- **Effects on Consumers**: Greenwashing erodes consumer trust, leading to skepticism about the authenticity of green claims and potential damage to a brand's reputation.
- **Consequences for Companies**: Organizations involved in greenwashing face the risk of diminished customer satisfaction, decreased brand loyalty, and potential fines from regulatory authorities.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS OF DAVIS MEETING

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)



WEF meeting in Davos 2024: 5 key takeaways

Dignitaries at the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on January 19. *Reuters*

YASHEE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 22

THIS YEAR'S edition of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting was held from January 15 to January 19. Every year, leaders from various fields gather in the Swiss ski resort to discuss challenges facing the world and explore the ways forward. The event has faced criticism for its elite and expensive nature, but the meet remains relevant, if only for the glimpse it offers into how the rich and powerful react to the most pressing issues.

This year, some key themes dominated proceedings.

Artificial Intelligence

The one issue that took centre stage was Artificial Intelligence (AI). While its many transformational abilities for human welfare were discussed, so were the need for regulation, fear of job losses, the risks of impersonation and misinformation, and the inequalities it can potentially worsen.

Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, who until a few months ago was raising warnings of "the risk of extinction from AI", struck a positive note: "Humans know what other humans want. Humans are going to have better tools. We've had better tools before, but we're still very focused on each other."

War and uncertainty

Business leaders spoke of the risk posed by a fragile geopolitical situation, wars in the Middle East and Europe, the threats to global supply chains, and the uncertainty around food security. Yet, no plans or roadmaps for peace were offered about the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Climate change

The need for businesses to adapt to climate change and for countries to unite for action against it was another hot topic. Ajay Banga, President, World Bank Group, said, we have an "existential climate crisis" on our hands and "a sense of urgency is our only saviour."

Others spoke about the ultimate benefit businesses will reap from adopting sustainable practices and about the need to allocate resources correctly in the fight against climate change.

China's economy

Facing a slowing economy, China tried to attract more investment from the West. At 5.2%, China's GDP growth in 2023 is still below pre-pandemic levels, and it is battling American attempts to isolate it, as evidenced in the semiconductor trade standoff.

And finally, India

An assessment of Davos 2024 by consulting firm McKinsey and Company said, "India is transforming rapidly as one of the fastest growing large economies in the world. When it comes to technology, talent, healthcare, and other areas, its future in 2024 — and beyond — is worth paying attention to."

Context: The World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting was recently concluded, bringing together global leaders to discuss pressing economic and social issues.

Five Key Takeaways:

1. **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
   - **Regulation and Oversight**: Consideration of the necessity for regulatory frameworks to manage AI's development.
   - **Job Losses and Economic Impact**: Deliberation on concerns regarding potential job losses and economic repercussions of AI advancement.
2. **War and Uncertainty**
   - **Geopolitical Risk:** Discussion on the challenges posed by a fragile geopolitical situation, with a focus on the Middle East and Europe.
   - **Uncertainty in Food Security**: Deliberation on uncertainties surrounding food security, emphasizing the absence of plans for peace in the Israel-Gaza conflict.
3. **Climate Change**
   - **Business Adaptation**: Emphasis on the necessity for businesses to adapt to climate change and the benefits of sustainable practices.
   - **Global Collaboration**: Advocacy for global unity and urgent action against the "existential climate crisis."
4. **China's Economy**
   - **Economic Challenges**: Discussion on China's efforts to attract Western investment amid a slowing economy and challenges in the semiconductor trade standoff.
   - **GDP Growth Concerns**: Examination of China's GDP growth in 2023 and its struggle to reach pre-pandemic levels.
5. **India's Transformative Growth**
   - **Rapid Transformation**: Assessment by McKinsey and Company highlighting India's rapid transformation as one of the fastest-growing large economies.
   - **Focus**: Recognition of India's potential in technology, talent, healthcare, and the importance of monitoring its future growth in 2024 and beyond.

TIMES OF INDIA

Jan 22

ECONOMIC FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

India, European trade bloc close to inking deal after 16 years of talks

Context: After 16 years of negotiations, India and the European trade bloc are on the verge of finalizing a significant trade deal.

European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- **About:** It is the intergovernmental organization of **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland**.
  - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are in the **Schengen area** but are **not EU member states.**
- **Set up**: In 1960 by its then seven Member States for the promotion of free trade and economic integration between its members.
- **History**: EFTA was founded by the Stockholm Convention in 1960.
- **Advisory Bodies**: The EFTA Parliamentary Committee, The EFTA Consultative Committee, The EEA EFTA Forum.
- **Goal**: Fosters free trade and economic integration among its members both within Europe and on a global scale.

Schengen Area:

- **About**: It is an area comprising 27 European countries that have officially abolished passports and many other types of border control at their mutual borders.

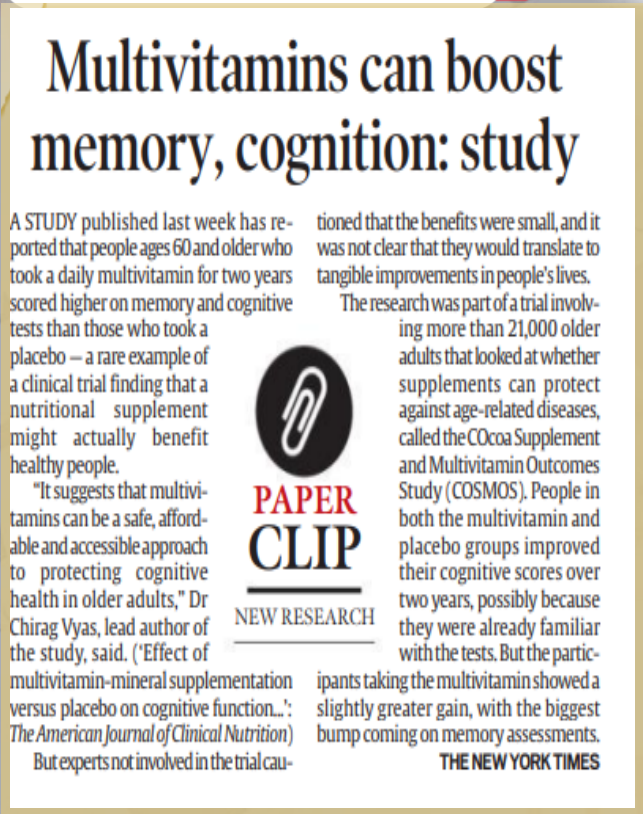


INDIAN EXPRESS

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STUDY ON MULTIVITAMINS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)



Multivitamins can boost memory, cognition: study

A STUDY published last week has reported that people ages 60 and older who took a daily multivitamin for two years scored higher on memory and cognitive tests than those who took a placebo — a rare example of a clinical trial finding that a nutritional supplement might actually benefit healthy people.

"It suggests that multivitamins can be a safe, affordable and accessible approach to protecting cognitive health in older adults," Dr Chirag Vyas, lead author of the study, said. ('Effect of multivitamin-mineral supplementation versus placebo on cognitive function...': *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*)

But experts not involved in the trial cautioned that the benefits were small, and it was not clear that they would translate to tangible improvements in people's lives.

The research was part of a trial involving more than 21,000 older adults that looked at whether supplements can protect against age-related diseases, called the COcoa Supplement and Multivitamin Outcomes Study (COSMOS). People in both the multivitamin and placebo groups improved their cognitive scores over two years, possibly because they were already familiar with the tests. But the participants taking the multivitamin showed a slightly greater gain, with the biggest bump coming on memory assessments.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

Context: A new study reported that adults 60 and older who took a daily multivitamin for two years scored higher on memory and cognitive tests than those who took a placebo — a rare example of a clinical trial finding that a nutritional supplement might actually benefit healthy people.

Key Points on Study

- The study suggests that multivitamins can play a role in safeguarding cognitive health among older adults.
- **Safety**: The research indicates that multivitamins are considered a safe option for cognitive health.
- **Affordability**: Multivitamins are highlighted as an affordable approach in promoting cognitive well-being.
- **Accessible Approach**: Multivitamins are portrayed as readily available, emphasizing their accessibility for a broad demographic.
- **Limited Benefits**: Despite the positive outlook, experts note that the cognitive benefits observed were relatively small.
- **Supplement Effectiveness:** The trial aims to explore whether supplements, including multivitamins, can protect against age-related diseases.

Multivitamins

- **About**: It combine various vitamins, minerals, and additional components under different names like multis, multiples, or simply vitamins.
- **Roles of Vitamins and Minerals**: Each vitamin and mineral within MVMs plays a unique and essential role in maintaining the body's health and well-being.
- **Limitations of MVMs in Diet**: MVMs are not a substitute for a diverse and healthy diet. They lack the complete nutritional profile found in whole foods.
- **Nutritional Benefits of Whole Foods**: Whole foods offer more than just vitamins and minerals; they also provide fiber and other essential compounds beneficial for overall health.

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