

NEWS TODAY

RAJASTHAN BECOMES THE FIRST STATE TO PASS RIGHT TO HEALTH (RTH) BILL

- **Extending a total of 20 rights**, Bill gives every resident of the state **right to avail free Out Patient Department (OPD) services** and In Patient Department (IPD) services at all public health facilities.

➤ Also, **similar healthcare services** will be provided free of cost **at select private facilities**.

- Under the Constitution, **public health and sanitation**, including hospitals and dispensaries, **come under State List**.

- **RTH creates a legal obligation on states** to ensure access to **timely, acceptable, and affordable health care** of appropriate quality.

➤ This includes **safe and potable water, sanitation, food, housing, health-related information** and education, and gender equality.

➤ **Supreme Court** (in Bandhua Mukti Morcha v Union of India & Ors) **held that right to life** (Article 21) **included RTH** within its fold.

- **Key features of RTH**

➤ **Inclusivity**: Health policy and programmes must prioritize needs of those furthest behind first towards greater equity.

➤ **Non-discriminatory**: RTH must be enjoyed without discrimination on grounds of race, age, ethnicity etc.

➤ **Participatory**: All stakeholders – including non-state actors– are meaningfully involved.

- **Challenges to RTH**: Low healthcare spending by governments; Less doctor-to-population, Nurse-to-population ratio, weak primary health care sector; regional disparity in accessibility; poor governance etc.

Initiatives taken to achieve RTH in India

High-Level Group constituted under 15th Finance Commission **recommended to declare RTH a fundamental right**.

National Health Policy (2017) provides for Universal Health Coverage.

Mental Healthcare Act 2017, Ayushman Bharat Mission, National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021 etc.

ONIONS TO BE IRRADIATED WITH GAMMA RAYS TO CURB POST-HARVEST LOSSES

- **Perishable nature of onions**, combined with **lower processing penetration and sub-optimal storage infrastructure** causes **post-harvest losses** (almost 25%).

➤ **Irradiation prevents sprouting** and thus helps in bringing down post-harvest losses.

- Food irradiation involves **controlled application of energy from ionizing radiations** such as gamma rays, electrons and X-rays for food preservation.

➤ Irradiation works **by disrupting the biological processes that lead to decay**.

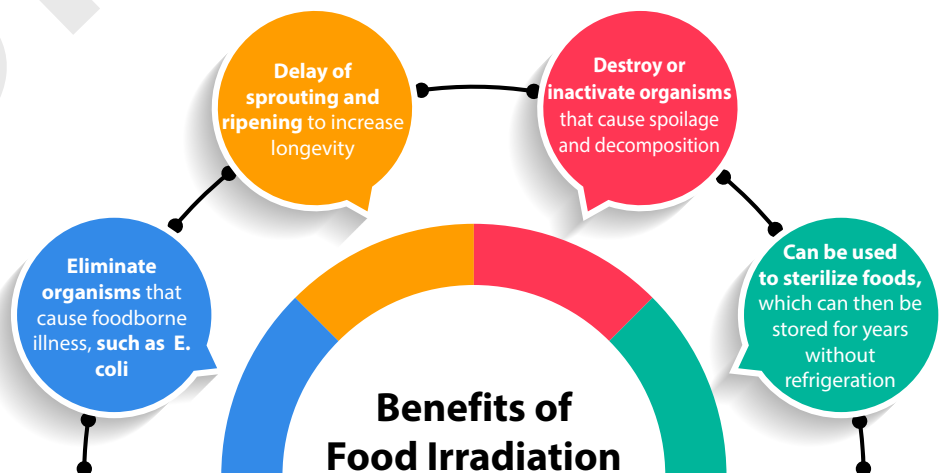
➤ Gamma ray, X-ray or electrons **do not induce any radioactivity in food**.

- **Sources of radiation approved for use on foods:**

➤ **Gamma rays** emitted from radioactive forms of cobalt (Cobalt 60) or Caesium (Caesium 137) used routinely to sterilize medical, dental products.

➤ **X-rays** produced by reflecting a high-energy stream of electrons off a target substance into food.

➤ **Electron beam (or e-beam)** is like X-rays and is a stream of high-energy electrons propelled from an electron accelerator into food.





NANO-FERTILIZERS FOR SUSTAINABLE CROP PRODUCTION AND MAINTAINING SOIL HEALTH REPORT RELEASED

- Report by a parliamentary Standing Committee **highlighted benefits of using Nano-fertilisers** and also suggested ways to increase its use.
 - **Earlier, IFFCO developed Nano urea and Nano DAP**, nanotechnology-based fertilisers.
 - IFFCO has **also developed nano fertilizer macronutrient grades** - Nano Nitrogen and **secondary /micronutrient grades** - Nano Zinc, Nano Copper, Nano Boron, Nano Sulphur, etc.
- **Benefits of Nano-fertilisers**
 - **Price Advantage:** Lower input cost for the farmers.
 - **Higher efficiency:** For ex: Nano Urea has 85-90% efficiency compared to about 25% of conventional urea.
 - **Ensure better crop productivity** (average 8 % higher crop yield was achieved). **Significant reduction in urea imports, government subsidies and logistics and warehousing cost.**
 - **Improved agriculture sustainability** through higher nutrient uptake, lower water consumption and reduction in environmental losses.
- **Recommendations**
 - **Nano-fertilisers** should be manufactured **by both public and private sector** companies.
 - **Bring production** of nano-fertilizers **under production linked incentive (PLI) scheme.**
 - **Establish long term agreements and set-up joint venture plants** in countries rich in fertilizers' raw materials.

EU SAYS IT'S READY TO WORK WITH INDIA WHILE ENFORCING ITS CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM (CBAM)

- Offer to resolve the issue comes **amid reports that India is considering imposing retaliatory tariffs on EU imports** in response to CBAM, which India said is discriminatory towards developing nations.
- **CBAM is a plan** from the European Union (EU) **to tax carbon-intensive products**, such as iron and steel, cement, fertiliser, aluminium and electricity generation, **from 2026.**
- **It aims to**
 - **Put a fair price on** carbon emitted during production of **carbon intensive goods** that are entering EU.
 - **Encourage cleaner industrial production** in non-EU countries.
 - **Address problem of carbon leakage.**
- The recently legislated, **The Inflation Reduction Act will allow the US to join with or mirror the EU's plan** to impose a carbon fee on imports of high-emitting goods.
- **Impact of such measures on India**
 - India exports about **\$2 billion worth of products annually to EU** that would **attract the CBAM levy.**
 - **Could result in market distortion besides aggravating** the already widened trust deficit amongst parties.
 - May **struggle to decarbonize fast enough to remain competitive** in the global market.
 - **Against principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities** and Respective Capabilities.

CARBON LEAKAGE

- **Some developed nations**, in efforts to cut emissions, **impose high costs on carbon-intensive businesses** in their own countries.
- **Businesses can potentially sidestep this** simply by moving production to a country with less stringent rules, **a practice called carbon leakage.**

ABOUT IFFCO

- It is a **multi-state cooperative society founded in 1967.**
- It is one of the biggest co-op and the **largest fertiliser manufacturer in the country** with nearly **29% market share in complex fertilisers** and **19% market share in Urea.**

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) CLEARS \$3 BILLION BAILOUT FOR SRI LANKA

- An IMF bailout usually **comprises a financing package, a structural reforms package** (to be implemented by borrowing country) and **specific debt conditions.**
 - **India, Japan (as a member of the Paris Club) and China** — Sri Lanka's top three bilateral creditors — **played a crucial role** in unlocking IMF assistance **by providing financing assurances.**
- **Bailout is provided under IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF),** extended when a **country faces serious medium-term balance of payments (BoP) problems** because of structural weaknesses that require time.
 - EFF support **comes with many conditionalities** that are meant **to do away with structural weaknesses in economy** that have caused the BoP crisis.
- **Other important lending facilities of IMF**
 - **Stand-By Arrangement:** for countries' external financing needs-and to support their adjustment policies with short-term financing.
 - **Flexible Credit Line (FCL):** for crisis-prevention and crisis-mitigation lending for countries with very strong policy frameworks.
 - **Standby Credit Facility:** to provide financial assistance to low-income countries (LICs) with short-term BoP needs.
 - **Extended Credit Facility** for countries with protracted BoP problems.
 - **Precautionary and Liquidity Line:** for countries with sound economic fundamentals but with some remaining vulnerabilities that preclude them from using FCL.

ABOUT IMF

- It is a **specialised UN Agency** conceived in 1944 at United Nations Bretton Woods Conference. **India is a founding member.**
- It **monitors economic and financial policies** of its member countries, **provides policy advice to nations** for promotion of international financial stability and monetary cooperation.
- Unlike development banks, **IMF does not lend for specific projects. It also provides precautionary financing** to help prevent crises.

INDIA AIMS TO LAUNCH A GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH: MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

• While **addressing the Global Conference on Digital Health** (organised by WHO), Minister stated that **framework will converge global efforts for digital health and scale up digital solutions** with use of cutting-edge technologies.

• **Digital health** includes categories such as **mobile health (mHealth)**, **health information technology (IT)**, **wearable** devices, telehealth and telemedicine, and personalized medicine.

➤ These technologies **use computing platforms, connectivity, software, and sensors for health care** and related uses.

• **Benefits:** Reduce inefficiencies, improve access to rural areas, reduce costs, increase quality, make medicine more personalized for patients, improve diagnostics, optimal utilisation of workforce etc.

Challenges

➤ Federal nature of **healthcare can lead to fragmentation** of actions.

➤ Digital systems **can lead to exclusion of the digitally illiterate**.

➤ **High cost** of developing digital infrastructure, **lack of skilled workforce etc.**

• **WHO Global Strategy on Digital Health**, adopted in 2020 by World Health Assembly, **presents a roadmap to link the latest developments in innovation and digital health** to improve health outcomes.

Initiatives taken in India

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission seeks to digitize India's healthcare system

Created database of pregnant women & children for ante-natal, post-natal and immunization related health services

Digital applications like **eRaktosh, eSanjeevani, CoWIN** etc.

ALSO IN NEWS



Alternative mode of execution

• Supreme Court asked **Centre to provide data** which may point to a more dignified, less painful and socially acceptable method of executing prisoners other than death by hanging.

➤ SC was hearing a **petition challenging the constitutionality of death by hanging** as a mode of execution.

➤ **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973** provides that sentenced person should be **hanged by the neck till he is dead**.

• Earlier, **Centre had supported death by hanging** over other modes such as **firing squads and lethal injections**.



Terms in News

Sticky inflation

➤ Inflation being sticky essentially means **that inflation is taking longer than expected to fall**.

➤ Essentially, **higher food and fuel prices have seeped into the broader economy** and made other things costlier.



National Security Act (NSA)

• NSA, passed by the Parliament in 1980, **empowers the state to detain a person without a formal charge and without trial**.

• Under the Act, a **person is taken into custody to prevent actions against the security of the state** or for **maintenance of the public order**.

➤ It is an **administrative order** passed either by **Divisional Commissioner or District Magistrate (DM)**.

• NSA **can be invoked** even if a **person is in police custody**; if a person **has been granted bail**; If the person has been **acquitted by the court**.



Directed Energy Weapons (DEWs)

• **Army Chief talked about** need of having **futuristic technologies like DEWs**.

About DEWs:

➤ It is an umbrella term covering **technologies that produce a beam of concentrated electromagnetic energy** or atomic or subatomic particles.

➤ Here, Direct energy is used **to disable, damage or destroy adversary equipment, facilities, and personnel**.

• **Advantages of DEW:** Speed of light engagement, Stealth-like performance, Precision targeting etc.




INS Androth

• **Anti-submarine craft INS Androth launched**.

• It is **second** in a series of eight Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft.

➤ First ship of the series was **INS Arnala**.

➤ INS Androth draws its name from the largest and longest island Androth Island, in the Lakshadweep archipelago.

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|  <p>Sandalwood</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PM presented a sandalwood Buddha statue (sitting in 'dhyana mudra' under the Bodhi tree) to Japanese PM. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Art of sandalwood carving has been an integral part of Karnataka's cultural heritage for centuries. ● Sandalwood is an evergreen tree. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Distribution: Mostly in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. ➤ Soil: Normally grows in sandy or stony red soils. ➤ Temperature: 0° C to 38° C. ➤ Annual rainfall: 500 to 3000 mm. |
|  <p>Earthquake tremors felt in North India</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tremors were felt after a 6.6 quake struck northern Afghanistan because of collision of Indo Australian plate with Eurasian plate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Epicenter (part of the earth's surface that is directly above the place where an earthquake occurs) of the earthquake is believed to be in the Hindu Kush (part of Himalaya) region. ● Depth of the fault is over 150 km so first primary waves were felt and then secondary waves. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Former is longitudinal and fastmoving (can travel both in liquids and solids) and later is transverse and slow moving (can travel only in solids) in nature. |
|  <p>Species in News</p> | <p>House Sparrow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● March 20 is celebrated as World Sparrow Day. ● About House Sparrow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ IUCN Status: Least Concern ➤ Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It is a social species, found in groups of eight to 10. ■ Known to nest in buildings. ■ Known only to live in close contact with humans, instead of forests. ➤ Habitat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inhabiting every continent , except Antarctica ,China and Japan. ■ Native: Eurasia and North Africa. ■ Reasons for the decline in population: Loss of habitat, diminishing ecological resources for sustenance, high levels of pollution, emissions from microwave towers etc. ➤ State Bird of Union Territory of Delhi. |
|  <p>International Liquid Mirror Telescope (ILMT)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Asia's largest ILMT inaugurated at Devasthal in Uttarakhand. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Owned By: Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES). ➤ Other telescope facility at Devasthal: Devasthal Optical Telescope and Devasthal Fast Optical Telescope are other two. ● LMTs are devices that consist a mirror-made with a reflective liquid, essentially mercury. However, other liquids like, low-melting alloys of gallium, are also used. ● LMTs are stationary telescopes that image a strip of sky which is at the zenith. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It can capture all possible celestial objects — from stars, galaxies, supernovae explosions, asteroids to space debris |
|  <p>Venus</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Images from Atla Regio area show evidence of volcanic activity on Venus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Images were taken by NASA's Magellan spacecraft between 1990 and 1992. ➤ At Atla Regio, two of the biggest volcanoes of Venus, Ozza Mons and Maat Mons, are located. ● Venus is second planet from Sun. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Often referred to as Earth's twin. Both planets are almost alike in size, density and gravity. ➤ It is hottest planet in solar system. ➤ It rotates on its axis backward, compared to most of other planets. |

Errata: In News Today Dated 21st March, 2023, Under World Happiness Report 2023 article 'India has been ranked at the 126th place among 146 countries', was incorrectly mentioned. **Correct information is 'India has been ranked at the 126th place among 137 countries'.**