

NEWS TODAY

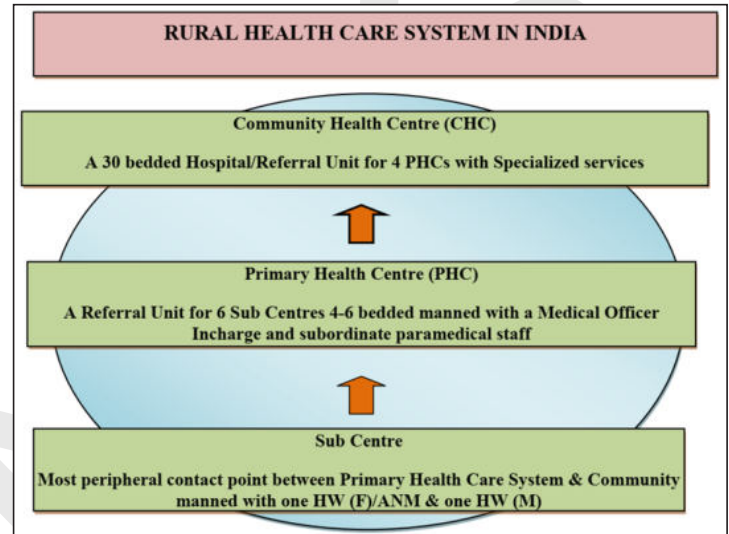
RURAL FOLKS HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS TO HEALTHCARE AS CITY DWELLERS: SUPREME COURT (SC)

- **Setting aside the Assam Rural Health Regulatory Authority Act of 2004** which allowed diploma holders to treat certain diseases, perform minor procedures and prescribe certain drugs, **SC held that:**

- **Prescribing Lesser Qualifications** for Medical Practitioners serving Rural Areas is violative of **substantive equality** and **non-discrimination**.
- **State legislature has no legislative competence** to enact a law in respect of modern medicine or allopathic medicine, contrary to standards set by central law.
- **Government is duty-bound** to enhance access to healthcare in such areas and **appoint qualified doctors for rural population**.

• India's Rural Health Care System

- Divided into **three-tier** (refer image), rural healthcare system In India faces **acute shortage of healthcare infrastructure and qualified medical professionals**.
- **Rural Health Statistics 2021-22** reported:



- Over **80% shortfall of specialists** in the 6,064 CHCs across the country.
- **14.4%** vacant posts of **Health Workers (Female) and Auxiliary Nursing Midwives (ANM)** in PHC and sub-centres.

- **Causes of Rural Health Disparities:** Poor socio-economic status of people, geographic isolation, infrastructure limitations, lack of interest of doctors to serve in rural areas etc.

DEMO-RUN OF INLAND WATER VESSEL POWERED BY METHANOL BLENDED DIESEL (MD15) HELD

- **Demo-run of Vessel named SB Gangadhar** in Guwahati, Assam was held in run-up to **India Energy Week 2023 (IEW 2023)**.

- IEW 2023, first major **event under India's G20 Presidency**, follows **PM's pledge at COP26 to cut India's emissions** to net-zero by 2070.
- IEW 2023 is held **under Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas**.

- **Methanol (CH₃OH)**, also known as **wood alcohol**, is a **low carbon hydrogen carrier fuel** produced **from high ash coal, agricultural residue, CO₂ from thermal power plants** and natural gas.

- It has **properties similar to ethanol**.
- It is **used in various products**, including plastics, paints, cosmetics etc.

• Significance of Methanol economy for India

- Blending of 15% methanol in gasoline **can result in at least 15% reduction in import of gasoline/crude oil**.
- **Would bring down GHG emissions by 20%** in terms of particulate matter, NO_x, and SO_x.
- Although **slightly lower in energy content** than petrol and diesel, methanol **can replace these fuels in transport sector, energy sector and retail cooking**.
- **Cost to convert vessels to run on methanol is significantly less** than other alternative fuel conversions.
- **Would create close to 5 million jobs**.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY INDIA FOR METHANOL BASED ECONOMY

- NITI Aayog's road map for Methanol Economy
- Bureau of Indian Standards has notified 20% DME (Di-methyl Ether, a derivative of methanol) in LPG
- Notification for M-15, M-85, M-100 blends issued by the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways
- In 2018, Assam Petrochemicals launched Asia's first canister-based methanol cooking fuel programme
- BHEL, Thermax, and IIT Delhi to set up coal-to-methanol plants in the country

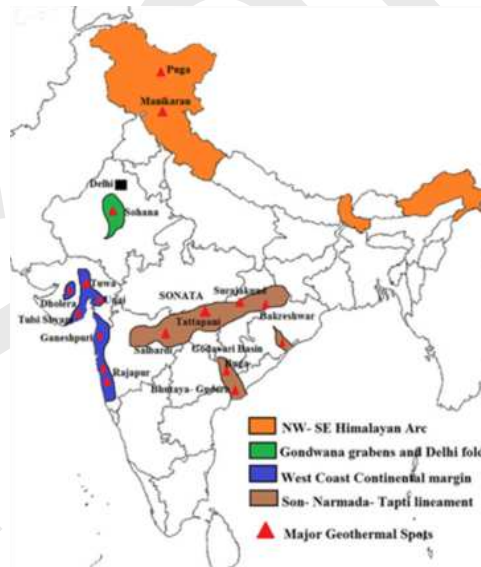
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) INDIA LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO DRIVE INCLUSIVE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- It is launched in **partnership with Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL)** and will focus on:
 - > **End-to-end management of plastic waste** by promoting segregation of waste at source and collection of segregated waste.
 - > **Setting up Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) or Swachhata Kendras** for recycling all kinds of plastic waste along the value chain.
 - > **Social Inclusion of 20,000 Safai Saathis or waste pickers** through access to government welfare schemes and linkages etc.
 - > **Building capacities of Urban Local Bodies for adopting MRFs model** for plastic and dry waste management.
- Initiative is a **scale-up of existing partnership** under UNDP's flagship **Plastic Waste Management Programme** to develop a **sustainable model for plastic waste management in India**.
 - > It promotes collection, segregation, and recycling of all plastics to move towards a **circular economy**.
- An alternative to current linear economy, **circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling** existing materials and products as long as possible to:
 - > **Extend life cycle** of products.
 - > **Reduce waste** to a minimum by **creating further value** (refer image)



ONGC TO MAP INDIA'S GEOTHERMAL RESOURCES IN SEARCH OF CLEAN ENERGY

- Move comes at a time when **India has set an ambitious target of 500 GW of installed renewable energy capacity by 2030 and net zero carbon emission by 2070**.
- Geothermal energy is an **energy source that is stored in the form of heat beneath earth's surface**.
 - > **Magma in inner layer of earth heats nearby rocks** and underground aquifers, **as a result hot water is released** through geysers, hot springs, steam vents, underwater hydrothermal vents, and mud pots.
 - > **Hot water and steam** can be piped up through underground wells and **used to generate electricity in a power plant**.
- As per **preliminary investigations undertaken by Geological Survey of India**, there are **around 300 geothermal hot springs** in India.
 - > **Puga and Chumathang in eastern Ladakh** are the **most promising geothermal sites**.
 - > **Other sites include Cambay in Gujarat, Tattapani in Chattisgarh, Khammam in Telangana & Ratnagiri in Maharashtra**.
 - > Total geothermal power potential is estimated to be 10 gigawatt (GW).
- Benefits of Geothermal:** carbon-free, renewable, provides a continuous, uninterrupted supply etc.
- Disadvantages:** location-specific energy source, associated with other emissions like sulphur dioxide and hydrogen sulphide, causes mini tremors in area of operation, high initial cost etc.



THE NECESSITY OF TAXING FARMERS' INCOME IN INDIA

- Some economic experts have opined that **income tax must be paid if one's income is above a threshold, irrespective of whether one is a farmer**.
- It can help in:
 - > **Increasing number of taxpayers and share of direct taxes** to total taxes.
 - > **Reducing tax evasions** with **better record-keeping** from farmers.
 - > **Formalization of loans** with a **unified taxation** across states.
- Income tax is a **direct tax that a government levies** on income of its citizens.
 - > **Section 10 (1) of Income Tax Act (1961) exempts agricultural income from tax**.
 - > **Agriculture is a state subject and State Governments can charge agricultural tax (Entry 46 in State List)**.
- But exemption leads to various anomalies**, highlighted by multiple committees (e.g. Kelkar task Force on Direct Taxes of 2002, Tax Administration Reform Commission of 2014) such as:
 - > **Laundering of non-agricultural income** as agricultural income **by individuals and corporate sector**.
 - > **Violation of Horizontal and Vertical Equity Principles** in Taxation which ensures tax fairness.
 - > **Lack of credibility** about the way states issue **farmer certificates**.
- Challenges to taxation:** Politically sensitive issue, extra burden on farmers (mostly small and marginal), lack of clarity on land titles, high crop output fluctuations etc.

ALSO IN NEWS



SC judgements to be available in 4 languages

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) stated that **judgments delivered by Supreme Court (SC)** will now be **translated into four languages —Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Odia.**
- CJI said that move **will help in the access to justice for the citizens as English is not a comprehensible language** to majority of the citizens in the country.
- **CJI also launched an Online e-Inspection Software at Delhi High Court** that will facilitate online e-inspection of digitised judicial files through the internet.



American depositary receipt (ADR) and Global depositary receipt (GDR)

- Recent data suggests that **several Indian Companies have terminated their ADRs and GDRs.**
- Depositary Receipt (DR) is an instrument **used by domestic companies to raise money outside the country.**
 - Both GDR and ADR are **used to raise funds from foreign market.**
 - However, **ADRs are traded on US stock exchanges while GDRs are traded mostly on European Exchanges.**
 - Typically, **ADRs are bought by retail investors while GDRs are bought by institutional investors.**
- These **shares are held by a foreign bank that provides DRs to companies in return for shares.**



Write-off Norms

- Recently, **Bombay High Court quashed write-off of AT-1 bonds** from Yes Bank administrator'.
- Write-off is **an accounting action that reduces value of an asset while simultaneously debiting a liabilities account.**
 - It is an **extreme version of write-down** as in write-down only a partial reduction of an asset's book value is done
- Write-off is **primarily used** to account for **unpaid loan obligations, unpaid receivables, or losses on stored inventory.**

Note: For further information on AT-1 bonds kindly refer News Today Dated 21st January, 2023.



Nidhi Companies

- Government has tightened **disclosure norms for Nidhi Companies.**
- Nidhi Company is **a type of Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC)** formed with primary object of **inculcating saving habits** among its members and **works on principle of mutual benefit.**
- **Registered under Companies Act,** they are **regulated by Ministry of Corporate Affairs for operational matters.**
 - They **don't require a license from RBI but RBI can issue directions** to them on deposit-taking activities.
 - They are controlled by Nidhi Rules, 2014.



ASCI issues new disclaimer norms for TV, digital ads

- Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) **updated its Guidelines for Disclaimers made in advertisements.**
 - ASCI is a **voluntary, self-regulatory organization** comprising members from marketing, creative, media, and allied companies in India.
 - ASCI has had **disclaimer guidelines since 2016.**
- **Key highlights of new guidelines**
 - **Use of disclaimer should be kept to a minimum** and avoid long and complex format.
 - **Duration and readability of a disclaimer should be clear to consumers.**
 - There **should not be more than one disclaimer in a single frame** of an ad.



Oil Palm

- A Supreme Court panel has **questioned need to revive oil palm plantations in Andamans** as a similar move in the past have proven to be a total commercial failure.
 - **Government launched National Mission on Edible Oils (Oil Palm)** in 2021-22 with **special focus on North Eastern States and Andaman & Nicobar .**
- Oil palm is a **native of West Africa** and popularly **known as African oil palm or red oil palm.**
- **Requires evenly distributed rainfall of 150mm/ month** and humidity of more than 80%.
- Best-suited soils are **moist, well-drained, deep, loamy alluvial soils.**



Exercises in News

- **TROPEX:** It is **Indian Navy's major maritime exercise** that is conducted biennially and also witnesses participation of Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Coast Guard assets.
- **AMPHEX 2023:** It is a **biennial Tri-Services Exercise** aimed at joint training of elements of all three services.

 <p>Olive Ridley Turtles (ORT) (<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several ORT breeding grounds in Godavari region of Andhra Pradesh (A.P) have been witnessing mass mortality of turtles. • ORT are smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles, inhabiting warm waters of Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In India, they nest mostly in eastern coast in A.P and Odisha (Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and Rushikulya coast). • ORT, along with Kemps ridley turtle, are best known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada. • Threats: Unfriendly fishing practices, exploitation of nesting beaches. • Protection: IUCN status: Vulnerable, Schedule I species under Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
 <p>Doomsday Clock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS) moved Doomsday clock to 90 seconds to midnight largely because of mounting nuclear warfare in Ukraine. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BAS was founded in 1945 by Albert Einstein and University of Chicago scientists who worked on Manhattan Project to build first atomic bomb. • Doomsday Clock, created in 1947, is a design that warns the public about how close we are to destroying our world with dangerous technologies of our own making. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Since its debut, minute hand has been reset 25 times.
 <p>BharOS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BharOS is an AOSP (Android Open Source Project) based operating system with no Google apps or services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It is developed by JandK Operations Private Limited, a non-profit organization incubated at IIT Madras. • Major difference between BharOS and Google's Android OS is that BharOS does not ship with Google services. • It will be a barebone operating system, which allows users to install apps of their own interest.
 <p>Immune Imprinting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, Scientific studies have found that immune imprinting can make bivalent boosters less effective. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bivalent boosters are variant specific booster shots of vaccines to develop better immunity against coronavirus. • Immune imprinting is a tendency of the body to repeat its immune response based on the memory of first infection through infection or vaccination. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Imprinting acts as a database for immune system, helping it put up a better response to repeat infections. ➤ This makes the variant specific booster dose less effective. • Concept of immune imprinting came to light for the first time in 1947.
 <p>Places in news</p>	<p>Estonia (Capital: Tallinn)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia expelled Estonia's Ambassador and downgrades their diplomatic relations. • Political Boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It is a country in north-eastern Europe, northernmost of three Baltic states (other two are Latvia and Lithuania). ➤ Shares border with Russia, Latvia. • Geographical features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ East Estonia is bounded by Russia—predominantly by Narva River and Lakes Peipus. ➤ South part is covered with moraine hills, and central part of country abounds in elongated hills with flat tops. ➤ Important rivers: Pärnu (longest), Pedja, Narva, and Kasari. ➤ Highest peak: Suur Munamägi (Great Egg Hill). 