

Current Affairs - 04 September 2024

HOW TO ENSURE FOOD SAFETY AND REDUCE WASTE

Context

- Food is far more than mere sustenance and it is an integral part of cultural identity, playing a pivotal role in rituals, festivals, and daily life.
- As India progresses towards its vision of Viksit Bharat by its 78th year of Independence, ensuring food safety and security is paramount.
- Therefore, it is important to delve into the multifaceted importance of food, the critical role of food safety, and the potential of food irradiation technology in addressing the challenges within India's food sector.

The Cultural and Economic Importance of Food

- Food is deeply embedded in cultural traditions, reflecting the values and identities of communities. It serves as a focal point during festivals, religious rituals, and social gatherings, reinforcing the social fabric of societies.
- However, the importance of food extends beyond cultural significance; it is a critical driver of economic growth.

Challenges in Food Safety and Security

- **Post-Harvest Losses and Perishable Goods**
 - One of the most significant challenges in food safety and security in India is the high level of post-harvest losses, especially of perishable goods such as fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and meat.
 - These losses occur at various stages of the supply chain, from harvesting to transportation, storage, and distribution.
 - The lack of adequate cold storage facilities, poor transportation infrastructure, and inefficient handling practices contribute to the spoilage of food before it reaches consumers.

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- **Fragmented Supply Chain and Infrastructure Gaps**
 - India's food supply chain is highly fragmented, with numerous intermediaries between farmers and consumers.
 - The lack of a cohesive and well-integrated supply chain also makes it difficult to implement standardised food safety measures across the board.
- **Regulatory and Compliance Issues**
 - India's food safety regulatory framework is complex, involving multiple agencies and regulations.
 - While the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) plays a central role in ensuring food safety, the enforcement of regulations at the ground level is often inconsistent.
- **Public Health Risks and Food-Borne Illnesses**
 - Food safety incidents, including contamination and the spread of food-borne illnesses, remain a serious concern in India.
 - Contaminants such as pesticides, heavy metals, and pathogens can enter the food supply at various stages, from production to processing and packaging.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Factors**
 - Climate change poses additional challenges to food safety and security in India.
 - Changes in temperature, rainfall patterns, and the frequency of extreme weather events can affect agricultural productivity and lead to increased risks of contamination and spoilage.

Conclusion

- Food is a cornerstone of culture and a vital component of economic growth and as India strides towards its vision of Viksit Bharat, addressing food safety and security through innovative solutions like food irradiation is essential.
 - With government support and entrepreneurial investment, India can enhance its food safety standards, reduce waste, and secure a more prosperous future for its agrifood sector.
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WHAT IS A REVIEW PETITION?



A group of medical students recently filed a review petition challenging the Supreme Court's decision to dismiss their writ petition, which sought to cancel the NEET UG 2024 examination.

- When a judgment is passed by a court, the doctrine of *functus officio* applies to it.
 - This Latin doctrine means that if the judgment in a case has been pronounced or an order has been made following due process of law, in such circumstances, the case cannot be reopened.
 - The right to file a review petition is an exception to this doctrine.
 - The word “review” means to examine again.
 - **Article 137** of the Constitution gives the **Supreme Court** the **power to review any of its judgments or orders**.
 - The court has the power to review its rulings to **correct a “patent error” and not “minor mistakes of inconsequential import”**.
 - **Similarly, High Courts** have also been given the **power** to review their judgments under **Article 226** of the Constitution. However, **it can only be invoked when there is a breach of law or violation of the Constitution**.
 - **Grounds for review petition:** In a 2013 ruling, the Supreme Court itself laid down three grounds for seeking a review of a verdict it has delivered.
 - the **discovery of new and important matter or evidence** which was not within the knowledge of the petitioner or could not be produced by him;
 - **mistake or error apparent on the face of the record;** or
 - any other sufficient reason, which means a reason that is **analogous to the other two grounds**.
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DRUG REPURPOSING

Researchers who have been working in the field of drug repurposing have found the repurpose potential of an antidepressant drug for cancer management.



- It is the **technique of using** an existing drug or drug candidate for a new treatment or medical condition for which it was not indicated before.
- It is also called **drug repositioning or drug reprofiling**, which is the identification of new therapeutic uses for existing or investigational drugs.
- It was initially developed to treat a **different medical condition**. It has been described as a serendipitous process that happens unexpectedly.
- The goal of drug repurposing is to quickly identify compounds with an established safety profile and known therapeutic advantages that may prove efficacious for other indications.
- **Applications:** Pharmaceutical companies are undertaking drug repurposing projects for **rare diseases**, oncology, infectious and autoimmune diseases and more.
- **Significance:** Drug repurposing can significantly reduce timelines and costs compared with de novo drug development.

Highlights of the research

- This research group has shown that **Selegiline (L-deprenyl)**, an **antidepressant** drug from a class of drugs called monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors, might be applied as anticancer therapeutics for breast cancer.
- Selegiline was found effective in **killing estrogen and progesterone-positive (ER+ & PR+)** as well as triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC).

E-SHRAM PORTAL

The Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoLE) stated that eShram has registered more than 30 crore unorganised workers, showcasing its rapid and widespread adoption among the unorganised workers.



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- It was **launched by the Ministry of Labour** and Employment in 2021 for the registration and creation of a comprehensive National Database of **Unorganized Workers**.
- It is a **“One-Stop-Solution”** for Unorganised Workers of the country.
- The registration in the portal is fully Aadhaar verified and Aadhaar seeded.
- Any unorganised worker can register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis.
- It allows an unorganised worker to register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis, under 400 occupations in 30 broad occupation sectors.
- The Ministry aims to facilitate **access to various social security schemes** being implemented by various Ministries/Departments for the benefit of the unorganised workers through the e-Shram portal.
- The portal is presently **integrated with the National Career Service(NCS) Portal**, Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), myScheme portal and Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhaan (PMSYM) scheme.

WORLD BANK REVISES INDIA’S GDP GROWTH ESTIMATE

Why in News?

The World Bank (WB) revised its forecast for India's GDP growth to 7% for FY25 from 6.6% previously, citing increases in household real estate investments and investments in infrastructure.

Highlights of the WB’s Forecast on the Indian Economy:

- **GDP growth:** India was the fastest-growing major economy at 8.2% last fiscal and is expected to grow at 7% this fiscal year and 6.7% in FY26.
- **Industrial growth:** It is expected to slow to 7.3% in FY26 compared to 7.6% in FY25. Industrial growth has recovered to 9.5% in FY24 after Covid-19 related disruptions.

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- **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF):** GFCF is expected to slow to 7.8% in FY25 compared to 9.0% in FY24. The GFCF growth rate stood at 6.6% in FY23.
- **Service sector growth:** Amid a globally weakening IT investment climate, the service sector growth is also expected to slip to 7.4% in FY25 and to 7.1 per cent in FY26, compared to 7.6 per cent in FY24.
- **Agricultural growth:** It is expected to register a sharp jump to 4.1% in FY25, compared to 1.4% in FY24.
- **Export-Import:** The World Bank predicted 7.2% growth in the exports of goods and services during FY25 compared to FY24. The growth of imports is expected to be 4.1% in FY25 compared to 10.9% in FY24.

Opportunities and Challenges for the Indian Economy:

- **Export sector:**
 - **India can expand its export portfolio** by increasing its exports of electronics, green technology items, textiles, garments, and footwear in addition to its strengths in IT, business services, and pharmaceuticals.
 - However, India has been **losing ground to rivals in the labour-intensive** apparel and footwear sectors.
 - India's share in global apparel exports fell from 4% in 2018 to 3% in 2022 due to increased production costs and decreasing productivity.
 - Meanwhile, countries like **Bangladesh, Vietnam, Poland, Germany, and France** have managed to increase their global export share in major job-creating sectors by up to 2% between 2015 to 2022.
- **Trade barriers:**
 - The global trade landscape has witnessed **increased protectionism** in recent years. The post-pandemic reconfiguration of global value chains has created opportunities for India.



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- **India has boosted its competitiveness** through the National Logistics Policy (NLP) and digital initiatives that are reducing trade costs.
 - However, tariff and non-tariff barriers have increased and could limit the potential for trade-focused investments.
 - **Current account deficit (CAD):**
 - The CAD stood at 0.7% in FY24 compared to 2% in FY23.
 - **Foreign exchange reserves** reached an all-time high of \$670.1 billion (in August 2023), equivalent to 11 months' worth of spending, thanks to a falling CAD and robust inflows from foreign portfolio investments.
 - However, the WB predicted a steady widening of the CAD from 1.1% in FY25 to 1.2% in FY26 and 1.6% in FY27.
 - **Jobs in India:**
 - While India is the fastest-growing major economy, **urban youth unemployment remains high at 17%**.
 - Jobs in India generated directly and indirectly connected to international trade have declined over the last decade.
 - The country has missed out on the export opportunity presented by China's withdrawal from labour-intensive manufacturing sectors.
 - To create more trade-related jobs, **India can integrate more deeply into global value chains**, which will also create opportunities for innovation and productivity growth.
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ZERO FIRS FILED IN LOCAL LANGUAGES MUST HAVE TRANSLATED COPY

Why in news?

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has directed Union Territories (UTs) to ensure that 'zero FIRs' recorded in local languages are accompanied by a translated copy of the same when forwarded to states with different languages.

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This directive aims to preserve the legal value of FIRs. Complying, the UTs have started sending out the original zero FIRs along with their English translation.

Zero FIRs

- The term first information report (FIR) is **not defined** in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1973 or in any other law.
- In police regulations or rules, **information recorded under Section 154 of CrPC is known as FIR.**
- **Section 154** states that every information relating to the commission of a cognizable offence, if given orally to an officer in charge of a police station, shall be reduced to writing.
- **A copy of the information** (as recorded) shall be given (free of cost) to the informant.
- **In essence, 3 important elements of an FIR:**
 - the information must relate to the commission of a cognizable offence,
 - it should be given in writing or orally to the head of the police station and
 - **it must be written down and signed by the informant, and its key points should be recorded in a daily diary.**
- **Zero FIRs**
 - A zero FIR **can be filed in any Police Station by the victim**, irrespective of their residence or the place of occurrence of crime.
 - A police station that receives a complaint regarding an alleged offence committed in the jurisdiction of another police station, **registers an FIR and then transfers it to the relevant police station for further investigation.**
 - **No regular FIR number is given** and after receiving the Zero FIR, the relevant police station **registers a fresh FIR** and starts the investigation.
 - It came up after the recommendation in the report of the **Justice Verma Committee** set up after the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape case to suggest amendments to the Criminal Law.

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- The objective of a **Zero FIR** is to ensure the victim doesn't have to run from pillar to post to get a police complaint registered.
- The provision is meant to provide **speedy redressal to the victim so that timely action can be taken after the filing of the FIR.**

FIR under new criminal laws

- The three new criminal laws came into effect from July 1, 2024.
 - The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam 2023, replaced the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.
 - Under the new laws, a person can now report incidents by electronic communication, without the need to physically visit a police station.
 - This allows for easier and quicker reporting, facilitating prompt action by the police.
 - Under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) police are now bound to register a 'zero FIR'.
 - Under Section 176 (3) of BNSS, collection of forensic evidence and video-recording of the crime scene in case of offences punishable with seven years or more is mandatory.
 - If the forensic facility is not available in a state, it can notify the utilisation of such facility of any other state.
 - Victims will receive a free copy of the FIR, ensuring their participation in the legal process.
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