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ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**Science
Reporter**



MK Yadav Sir

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UK, US Oppose Extending WTO Food Subsidy Clause

Kirtika.Suneja@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The US, UK, EU and Japan have opposed extending the temporary peace clause agreed upon at the 2013 World Trade Organization (WTO) Bali conference that prevents legal action against any developing nation that breaches the food subsidy limits specified in the agreement on agriculture.

At an agriculture negotiation meeting at the WTO on Monday, the US said India's expansion of support to its rice and wheat farmers has negative spillover effects. India has invoked the clause thrice.

"India said that the strongest evidence supporting the necessity of public stockholding was in its own actions during the pandemic, when it mobilised its food stocks and provided food to 80 million people in 18 months' span," said a Geneva-based official.

Public stockholding is a policy tool used by governments to purchase, stockpile and distribute food when needed.

Developing countries' food subsidies are protected by an interim peace clause which shields food procurement programmes against action from WTO members in case the subsidy ceilings—10% of value of food production in the case of India and



other developing countries—are breached.

India, Indonesia, South Africa and China are among the 80 WTO member countries that have called for initiating text-based negotiations to find a permanent solution on public stockholding (PSH) for food security. Developing countries and the African Group have demanded a food security package at the 2024 conference.

Their joint proposal represents 6.6 billion people and more than 80% of the global population.

WTO PEACE CLAUSE (Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)

Context: The US, UK, EU and Japan have opposed extending the temporary **peace clause** agreed upon at the 2013 World Trade Organization (WTO) Bali conference.

Key Points

- The US said **India's expansion of support to its rice** and wheat farmers has negative spillover effects. India has invoked the clause thrice.
- Developing countries' food subsidies are protected by an interim peace clause which shields food procurement programmes against action from WTO members in case the subsidy ceilings - **10% of value of food production in the case of India and other developing countries** - are breached.
- The "Peace Clause" is the term used by trade negotiators to refer to **Article 13 of the Agriculture Agreement of the World Trade Organization**.
- According to Article 13, a WTO member's domestic support policies and export subsidies that are **permitted by the terms of the Agreement on Agriculture** cannot be objected to by other WTO members on the basis that they violate the terms of another WTO agreement.
- It **prevents legal action against** any developing nation that breaches the food subsidy limits specified in the agreement on agriculture.
- **India, Indonesia, South Africa and China** are among the 80 WTO member countries that have called for initiating text based negotiations to find a permanent solution on public stockholding (PSH) for food security.
- **Developing countries and the African Group** have demanded a food security package at the 2024 conference.

PFRDA to allow pension funds for investments in sovereign green bonds

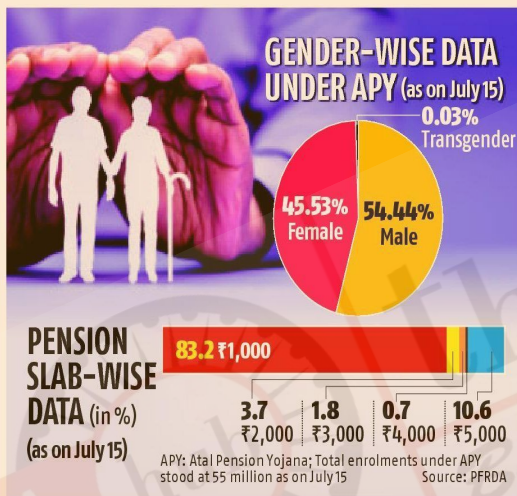
NIKESH SINGH
New Delhi, 18 July

Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority (PFRDA) Chairman Deepak Mohanty on Tuesday said the regulator would allow pension funds to invest in sovereign green bonds when issued.

The government is expected to issue sovereign green bonds in the second half of the current financial year (H2FY24) as part of overall borrowing programme.

Currently, there are 10 pension fund managers that manage funds under the National Pension System.

In the last fiscal year (FY23), the government had raised ₹16,000 crore through the issuance of maiden sovereign green bonds with the objective to utilise the proceeds for funding public sector projects seeking to reduce carbon emissions. Currently, the PFRDA's assets under management (AUM) is at ₹9.8 trillion and will certainly be more than ₹11 trillion by FY24-end, Mohanty said. Talking about



Atal pension Yojana (APY) saturation drive, Mohanty said 2.9 million new subscribers have been enrolled during the first quarter of the current fiscal year (Q1FY24) against 2.7 million in Q1FY23.

The PFRDA has set a target of 13 million new subscribers under APY in FY24 as against 12 million in FY23. 55 million enrolments have taken place since the launch in 2015.

The PFRDA reviewed per-

formance and strategies of banks and state-level bankers' committees for 2023-24 to accelerate comprehensive coverage of APY.

The State Level Bankers' Committee in the North Zone have contributed significantly towards the FY23 target with Uttar Pradesh achieving 165 per cent of the target, followed by Madhya Pradesh (145 per cent), and Rajasthan (117 per cent), Mohanty said.

Context: Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority (PFRDA) would allow pension funds to invest in sovereign green bonds when issued.

- Currently, there are 10 pension fund managers that manage funds under the National Pension System.

National Pension System (NPS)

- It is a **voluntary, defined contribution retirement savings scheme** designed to enable the subscribers to make optimum decisions regarding their future through systematic savings during their working life.
- It was launched in January **2004 for government employees**.
- However, in 2009, it was **opened to all sections**.
- The scheme **allows subscribers to contribute regularly** in a pension account during their working life.
- On retirement, **subscribers can withdraw a part of the corpus** in a lump sum and use the remaining corpus to buy an annuity to secure a regular income after retirement.
- This system is managed by **PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority)**.

Sovereign green bonds

- **Green Bonds:** These are like any other debt instrument except for the fact that the **issuer of the green bond pledges to use its proceeds to finance projects** that will have a positive impact on the climate and environment.
- **Different from standard bonds:** Standard bonds proceeds can be used for various purposes as per the choice of the issuer, whereas proceeds of green bonds are **earmarked for green projects or projects** that benefit the environment.
- **Issuer:** Green bonds can be **issued by countries, companies and multilateral organisations** to only fund projects that have positive impacts on the climate and environment and provide investors with fixed income payments.
- **Budget 2022-23:** The Finance Minister in the Budget 2022 announced that the government proposes to **issue sovereign green bonds** to mobilise resources for green infrastructure.

CRCS-Sahara refund portal launched

Union home minister Amit Shah launched 'CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal', aimed at refund of crores of depositors' money in four cooperative societies of Sahara Group in about 45 days. The CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal has been developed for submission of legitimate claims by the genuine depositors of the Sahara Group of Cooperative Societies namely, Sahara Credit Cooperative Society Ltd, Saharayan Universal Multipurpose Society Ltd, Humara India Credit Cooperative Society Ltd and Stars Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd. Terming this a historic moment, he said this is the first time when depositors are getting refunds in a case where multiple government agencies are involved and each one has done a seizure. He assured the depositors that no one can stop their money now and that they will get the refund in 45 days after registering on the portal.

STAFF WRITER

Context: Union Home and Cooperation Minister launched 'CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal', aimed at refund of hard earned money of crores of depositors in four cooperative societies of Sahara Group in about 45 days.

CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal

- The money will be **returned to 10 crore investors** of the four cooperative societies within nine months.
- This was followed by a **Supreme Court order** directing the transfer of Rs 5,000 crore from the Sahara-Sebi refund account to the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS).
- Around 2.5 crore people have deposits of up to Rs 30,000 in the four **cooperative societies** namely Sahara Credit Cooperative Society Ltd, Saharayan Universal Multipurpose Society Ltd, Humara India Credit Cooperative Society Ltd and Stars Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd.
- The **refund portal has been developed by a subsidiary of IFCI Ltd**, for submission of legitimate claims by the depositors of these cooperative societies.
- Depositors need two important things: Aadhaar registration with mobile and **Aadhaar-linking** with the bank account where refund is to be deposited.
- Depositors will also **require to provide receipt details**, and that they will need to download a form, fill it and re-upload it on the portal for processing of the refund.
- The **Common Services Centre** would also help and guide depositors for online registration on the portal for refund.

PRESIDENT OF INDIA PRESENTS BHOOMI SAMMAN 2023

Context: The President of India presented the “**Bhoomi Samman**” 2023 at a function organised by the Union Ministry of Rural Development.

- The awards were received by State Secretaries and District Collectors along with their teams who have excelled in achieving saturation of the core components of **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)**.

Bhoomi Samman Scheme

- The “Bhoomi Samman” Scheme primarily aims to **acknowledge and encourage outstanding performance in the implementation of the DILRMP**.
- This program is **instrumental in modernizing land records and registration processes**, streamlining administrative procedures, and ensuring transparency and efficiency in governance.
- The Department of Land Resources has set an ambitious target of **achieving 100% saturation in the digitization of land records** across all districts of the country by 31st March 2024.
- The “Bhoomi Samman” serves as an **inspiration and testament** to the dedicated efforts made by these individuals and teams in realizing this goal.
- Districts that **successfully achieve 100% targets** in the core components of the DILRMP receive the prestigious Platinum Grading.
- This recognition **signifies their exceptional performance** and commitment to embracing digital transformation and modernization in the land records domain.
- The “Bhoomi Samman” Scheme **exemplifies the principles of cooperative federalism** and trust between the central and state governments.
- The grading system for the awards is **based on the performance reports and inputs** provided by the states and union territories, fostering a strong partnership in the computerization and digitization of land records.

The NITI Aayog unveils TCRM Matrix Framework to Revolutionize Technology Assessment and drive Innovation in India

Context: The NITI Aayog, released, under the NITI Working Paper series, the **Techno-Commercial Readiness and Market Maturity Matrix (TCRM Matrix) framework**, a pioneering assessment tool designed to revolutionize technology evaluation, foster innovation, and fuel entrepreneurship in India.

Key Points

- The Working Paper casts light on the historical evolution of technology assessment frameworks, including the **Technology Readiness Level (TRL)**, **Commercialization Readiness Level (CRL)**, and **Market Readiness Level (MRL) scales**.
- By building upon these frameworks' core principles, the TCRM Matrix framework presents an **integrated assessment model** that offers in-depth insights and actionable intelligence to stakeholders at every stage of the technology development cycle.
- The working paper provides clear **guidelines for integrating the TCRM Matrix framework** within the broader innovation ecosystem.
- By doing so, **policymakers, strategists, academicians, and investors** can unlock its full potential and drive meaningful change.
- The adoption of the TCRM Matrix framework necessitates a comprehensive analysis and contextualization within the **unique national and sectoral innovation landscapes**.

India reports a record 93% DPT3 immunisation coverage in 2022: WHO

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

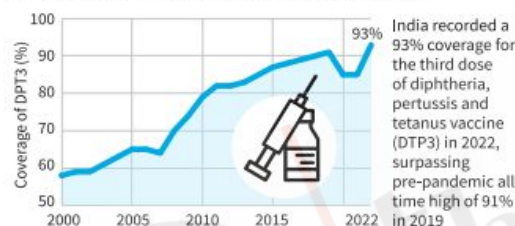
The coverage rate for DPT3, the third dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccines, in India rose to an all-time of 93% in 2022, surpassing the previous pre-pandemic best of 91% recorded in 2019, and also marking a sharp increase from the 85% recorded in 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said.

The WHO and UNICEF estimates for national immunisation coverage for 2022, released on Tuesday, showed that in the WHO South-East Asia Region, the coverage rate for DPT3 recovered to the pre-pandemic level of 91%, a sharp increase from the 82% recorded in 2021. The region also witnessed a 6% improvement in the coverage of the measles vaccine, rising to 92% in 2022 from 86% in 2021.

The number of zero-dose children (those that have not received even the first dose of DPT vaccine) halved to 2.3 million in

All-time high

A look at DTP3 coverage rate over the years, according to WHO estimate of national immunization coverage in India



2022 from 4.6 million in 2021. Similarly, the number of partially vaccinated children (those that have received at least one dose of DPT vaccine but did not complete the primary series of three doses) reduced to 6.5 lakh in 2022 from 1.3 million in 2021.

The region had the best immunisation recoveries among all the WHO regions. This can be majorly attributed to the efforts being made by India and Indonesia, Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia, said. She said every child deserved to be protected against life-threaten-

ing diseases with routine immunisation, adding that the momentum built with impressive efforts and immunisation service must continue to benefit every child.

Indonesia reported a DPT3 coverage of 85% in 2022, the same as in 2019, but rising sharply from the 67% recorded in 2021. Bhutan recorded 98% and the Maldives 99%, surpassing their pre-pandemic rates. Bangladesh with 98% and Thailand 97% demonstrated consistency in routine immunisation coverage throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, the report said.

Context: Over 4 million more children were vaccinated in 2022 compared to the year before, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** said.

Key Points

- The **three-dose vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough)**, also known as the **DTP3**, is used as the global marker for immunisation coverage.
- Over **20.5 million children missed out** on one or more vaccines delivered through routine immunisation services in 2022, compared to 24.4 million children in 2021.
- **Large lower-middle income countries** such as India and Indonesia have shown strong recoveries as they stepped up efforts to address the historic backsliding in immunisation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Vaccination against one of the most contagious pathogens, measles, has not recovered as well as other vaccines.
- This has **increased the risk of measles infection** for an additional 35,2 million child.
- Only rates of the **cervical cancer-preventative human papillomavirus** or HPV vaccination have returned to pre-pandemic levels

DTE

July 19

UN REPORT ON GENDER PARITY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Issue Related to Gender)

Only 1% women live in countries with high gender parity, female empowerment: UN report

In India, women empowerment, gender parity were found to be 'low' despite 'medium' human development

By Preeti Banerjee
Published: Tuesday 18 July 2023



Gender gap

India jumped eight spots to rank 127 in the Global Gender Gap Index, 2023. A look at how select countries fared

Rank	Country	Score	Rank change
1	Iceland	0.912	-
2	Norway	0.879	+1
59	Bangladesh	0.722	+12
103	Bhutan	0.682	+23
107	China	0.678	-5
115	Sri Lanka	0.663	-5
116	Nepal	0.659	-20
127	India	0.643	+8
142	Pakistan	0.575	+3



Context: Only an abysmal 1 percent of women across the world live in countries that have managed to **achieve both high women empowerment and gender parity**, according to a new report by the United Nations.

- The first-of-its-kind report that presents a comprehensive analysis of the progress made in human development of women and girls was jointly created by two UN agencies – **UN Women and UN Development Programme.**

Key Points

- On an average, women are empowered to achieve **only 60 percent of their full potential.**
- They also were found to achieve **28 per cent less than men across key human development dimensions.**
- The report identified areas where comprehensive policy action is needed:
 - **Health policies:** Support and promote long and healthy lives for all, with a focus on universal access to sexual and reproductive health
 - **Equality in education:** Address gaps in skills and quality of education, especially in fields such as STEM, to empower women and girls in the digital age
 - **Work-life balance and support for families:** Invest in policies and services that address work-life balance, including affordable quality childcare services, parental leave schemes, and flexible working arrangements
 - **Women's equal participation:** Set targets and action plans for achieving gender parity in all spheres of public life and eliminate discriminatory laws and regulations that hold women back
 - **Violence against women:** Implement comprehensive measures focused on prevention, changing social norms, and eliminating discriminatory laws and policies

Organic nanogenerator that harvests light energy can power wearable devices on the go

Context: Scientists have developed a **nanogenerator** device for harvesting light energy using organic material, which has the potential to power wearable devices on the go.

Key Points

- The device can **generate current and voltage** from minute amounts of heat or light that fall on it.
- The experimental exploration of energy materials has led to the successful synthesis of an organic energy material called polyaniline-rubrene, and they have fabricated an **Organic Pyroelectric Nanogenerator (OPyNG)**.
- The **pyroelectric effect** of the device is induced by the light-induced change in spontaneous polarization occurring in the ultra-thin oxidized surface layer of the polyaniline-rubrene thin film.
- The working principle of the device is based on the **pyro-phototronic effect**.
 - The **pyroelectric effect is the change in polarization** due to the change in temperature.
 - **Ferroelectric materials are expected to be strongly pyroelectric** because ferroelectric materials have a large range of temperature-dependent spontaneous polarization
- This effect holds a unique advantage in the **pyroelectric nanogenerator (PyNG)**, as it can optically induce the pyroelectric effect, which is useful for energy harvesting.
- The **fabricated OPyNG device** utilizing organic material provides new insights and opens up new avenues for harvesting energy from organic materials.
- The OPyNG operates in the **UV-visible-NIR region** in self-powered mode, and it offers significant advantages as it can function as a self-sustainable standalone device.

Relief for Antrix as Dutch court junks Devas plea

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Getty Images/iStockphoto



In a big relief for Isro's commercial arm Antrix against its legal fight against Bengaluru-based Devas Multimedia, a court in the Netherlands on Tuesday upheld the liquidation orders of the company by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the subsequent orders of the NCLAT and Supreme Court of India upholding the tribunal's liquidation order.

In a judgment on Tuesday, the preliminary injunction judge HJ Vetter of the Dutch court rejected the request of Devas Multimedia America Inc (DMAI), a subsidiary of parent company Devas Multimedia, to enforce the ICC (international tribunal) judgment — which awarded \$1.2 billion compensation to Devas for a failed satellite deal with Antrix in 2005 — by seeking to seize the assets in form of contract receivables (amount received from satellite services) of Antrix as well as its sister arm NSIL in Netherlands.

The judge said, "It follows from all the foregoing that the liquidation judgment can be recognised in the Netherlands. This means the Dutch court

The court also ordered Devas to pay costs for the legal proceedings to Antrix and Newspace within 14 days

must assume that Devas has gone into liquidation and that a liquidator is in office. It is not in dispute between the parties that under Indian law in case of liquidation, the appointed liquidator is exclusively authorised to act on behalf of the liquidated company, in this case Devas."

Lauding the Dutch court order, Chinmoy Roy, senior legal officer of Antrix, told TOI, "After the Indian court ruling in our favour, this Dutch court order is another welcoming victory."

The judge further ruled, "...Those considerations must be read in light of the NCLT's opinion and the Supreme Court that, in short, there was fraud in the Devas agreement and are understandable in that light."

The court also ordered DMAI to pay the costs of the legal proceedings to Antrix and Newspace (NSIL) within 14 days of the order.

ANTRIX - DEVAS CASE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Space Sector)

Context: In a big relief for Isro's commercial arm **Antrix** against its legal fight against **Bengaluru Based Devas Multimedia**, a court in the Netherlands upheld the liquidation orders of the company by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the subsequent orders of the NCLAT and Supreme Court of India upholding the tribunal's liquidation order.

- In a judgment, the Dutch court rejected the request of Devas Multimedia America Inc (DMAI), a subsidiary of parent company Devas Multimedia, to enforce the ICC (international tribunal) judgment — which **awarded \$1. 2 billion compensation to Devas for a failed satellite deal with Antrix in 2005** — by seeking to seize the assets in form of contract receivables (amount received from satellite services) of Antrix as well as its sister arm NSIL in Netherlands.

Background

- In 2005, Devas Multimedia signed an agreement with Antrix to provide multimedia services to mobile users using the leased **S-band satellite spectrum** to be provided by Antrix.
- In 2011, the **UPA-2 government canceled this agreement** on the ground that it needed the S-band satellite spectrum for national security and other social purposes.
- This led to arbitration between Antrix and Devas at the International Chambers of Commerce (ICC) and two bilateral investment treaty (BIT) arbitrations. India **lost all three disputes**.

ANTRIX

- Antrix Corporation Limited (ACL), Bengaluru is a **wholly-owned Government of India Company** under the administrative control of the Department of Space.
- It is as a marketing arm of ISRO for promotion and commercial **exploitation of space products, technical consultancy services** and transfer of technologies developed by ISRO.
- Antrix is **engaged in providing Space products and services** to international customers worldwide.

DTE exclusive: 2020 order on floodplain zoning declaring Gomti 'non-perennial river' draws flak

Floodplain zone halved to 50 metres, contradicting an Allahabad HC order



NEXT NEWS >

By Zumbish
Published: Monday 17 July 2023



Context: A three-year-old government order (GO) issued by the irrigation department of the Uttar Pradesh government declaring the Gomti as a **“non-perennial river”** has drawn flak from water experts and river rights activists.

- The GO defining the floodplain of 12 rivers was regarding a case being heard by the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**.
- In 2018, the NGT raised dissatisfaction over encroachment and construction activities on the floodplains of rivers, which included **Kali, Hindon, Varuna, Rapti, Sai, Betwa and Ghaghra**.

Gomti

- Gomti is a **tributary of Ganga river** and an alluvial river of the Ganga Plain.
- It **originates from Gomat Taal** which formally is known as Fulhaar jheel, near Madho Tanda, Pilibhit in UP.
- It extends 900km through UP and meets the Ganges River in Ghazipur.
- At the Sangam of Gomti and Ganga, the famous **Markandey Mahadeo temple is situated**.
- The most important tributary is the **Sai River**, which joins near Jaunpur
- The cities of **Lucknow, Lakhimpur Kheri, Sultanpur and Jaunpur** are located on the banks of Gomti
- The river cuts the Jaunpur city into equal halves and becomes wider in Jaunpur.

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