

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 21-03-2024

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## KARNATAKA'S DRAFT BILL FOR GIG WORKERS

### Context:

- The Karnataka government plans to propose **new legislation for the welfare of gig workers**.

### About:

- While the state government is yet to finalise the **Karnataka Gig Workers (Conditions of Service and Welfare) Bill, 2024**, it has shared a draft with stakeholders during a meeting last week.
- **Major highlights** of the draft are:
  - ♦ Strict mechanisms to ensure fair terms of contract and ensure income security,
  - ♦ Proper dispute and grievance redressal mechanisms,
  - ♦ Setting up of a state-level welfare board,
  - ♦ A central transaction monitoring system,
  - ♦ A provision to impose penalties on aggregators for violations, among others, and
  - ♦ Occupational safety and health of workers.
- **After Rajasthan, Karnataka will be the second state** to have a law for the welfare of gig workers.
- While the central government has **included gig workers in the social security code** that was passed by the Parliament in 2020, it has not been implemented as the government has yet to frame the rules.

### Gig Economy

- The Gig economy, also known as the **freelance economy or on-demand economy**, refers to a labor market characterized by short-term, flexible work arrangements.
  - ♦ The **gig economy** is about individual workers carrying out tasks for clients through the intermediation of a platform on a **task-by-task basis**.
- **Gig workers:** NITI Aayog defines 'gig workers' as those engaged in work outside of the traditional employer-employee arrangement.
  - ♦ NITI Aayog's report titled 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy' defines a gig worker as
    - **"someone who engages in income-earning activities outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship, as well as in the informal sector"**.

- ♦ Additionally, it defines those working with platforms such as **Ola, Uber, Dunzo, Swiggy, Zomato** and **Urban Company** as **platform workers**.

### Recent trends in India

- In the past few years, especially **after the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a sharp rise in the number of people engaged in gig work**, according to labour rights experts and activists.
- According to the **NITI Aayog, 77 lakh (7.7 million) workers were engaged in the gig economy in 2020-21** and the workforce is expected to **"expand to 2.35 crore (23.5 million) workers by 2029-30"**.

### Significance of the sector:

- The gig economy is based on **temporary, or freelance jobs**, often involving **connecting with clients or customers through an online platform**.
- The gig economy can benefit workers, businesses, and consumers by making work more adaptable to the **needs of the moment** and the **demand for flexible lifestyles**.
  - ♦ **Time flexibility:** Workers operating in the gig economy are allowed to work any of the hours they desire.
  - ♦ **Income flexibility:** It is an increasingly attractive market due to the sheer flexibility that allows individuals to **earn extra income**.
- **Size of the sector:** As per the report, 47 percent of gig work currently is in **medium-skilled jobs**, 22 percent in **high-skilled**, and about 31 percent in **low-skilled jobs**.
  - ♦ **Drivers and sales persons** accounted for more than 52 percent of the gig workers in 2019-20.
  - ♦ When workers are classified by industries, the report said that 26.6 lakh gig workers were involved in **retail trade** and **sales** in FY20, and about 13 lakh were in the **transportation sector**.
  - ♦ Roughly 6.2 lakh persons were in **manufacturing** and another 6.3 lakh in the **finance and insurance activities**.

### Challenges/Issues:

A civil society organisation, Janpahal's **'Respect and Integrity of Gig workers; Humanity and Trust in Service (RIGHTS)'** survey, has highlighted the following challenges.

- **Long working hours:** Almost a third of app-based cab drivers work for **over 14 hours a day**, while more than 83% work more than 10 hours and 60% work over 12 hours.
- **Reflects caste equations:** It noted that social disparities make the situation worse, with **over 60% of the drivers from Scheduled Castes and Tribes** working for over 14 hours a day, while **only 16% from the unreserved category** work such long hours.
- **Low pay:** The study report says that over 43% of participants in the study earn less than ₹500 a day or ₹15,000 a month, after deducting all their costs.
  - ♦ The study found that 34% of app-based delivery persons earn less than ₹10,000 a month, while 78% of them are spending over 10 hours each day at work.
- **Demographic trends:** Out of 5302 cab drivers and 5028 delivery persons across eight cities participated in a 50-question survey, 78% of the respondents were in the age group of 21 to 40 years.
- **Risky business:** Due to the demanding work hours, the study found that drivers are physically exhausted, and exposed to an increased risk of road traffic accidents, especially due to the **'10-minute delivery at the doorstep' policy** of certain e-commerce platforms.
  - ♦ The report said that 86% of delivery persons found such policies **"completely unacceptable"**. The lack of social and job security creates additional stress and leads to potential health issues.
- **Expenses exceed earnings:** While 72% of the cab drivers said that they face difficulty in managing expenses, 76% of the delivery persons are struggling to make their ends meet.
  - ♦ 68% of cab drivers' responses even show that their overall expenses exceed their earnings, which indicate how a vast number of app-based workers could be in debt-like situations.
- **Huge deductions:** 35% of the respondents reported the companies are deducting between 31-40% of commission rate per ride, while the officially claimed figure by the companies themselves is 20%.
- **Customer misbehavior:** Customer behaviour affects a significant majority (72%) of drivers in a

negative way, while 68% of delivery persons are reportedly affected by it negatively," the report said.

- **Inability to take leaves:** It added that 41% of the drivers said they are unable to take even a single day off in a week; 48% of delivery persons too reported their inability to take a weekly off.
- **Issue of ID deactivation:** A glaring 83% of the drivers reported that the issue of ID blocking affects them negatively, 47% stated that this issue extremely affects them. In the case of delivery persons, this percentage is even higher at 87%.

### Suggestions/Recommendations

- **Social security measures:** Authors of the study recommended stronger social security for app-based workers.
  - ♦ Social security measures are required like **paid sick leave, health access and insurance, retirement/pension plans and other contingency benefits**.
- **Oversight mechanism:** They called on the government to exercise oversight on the fairness of algorithms and mechanisms used by platforms to monitor such workers.
- **Skilling:** It is recommended that skill gaps be bridged by **carrying out assessments periodically** and partnering with platform businesses for onboarding skilled women and persons with disabilities.
  - ♦ It is also suggested to make aggregate data public to enable decision-making.
- **Women in the gig economy:** Companies should carry out gender sensitization and accessibility awareness programmes for workers and their families, particularly **to promote the rights of women and persons with disabilities**.

### Way ahead

- The gig economy is a **growing trend**, with many people attracted to the flexibility and freedom it offers. But an **adequate regulatory mechanism in place** is the need of hour.
- The gig economy is here to stay, and for many, it offers a desirable work style with **flexibility and autonomy**. But it also comes with challenges like income insecurity and lack of benefits, which needs to be **dealt with collectively by the government, private sector and civil society**.

Source: [The Print](#)

## SOLAR WASTE

### Context

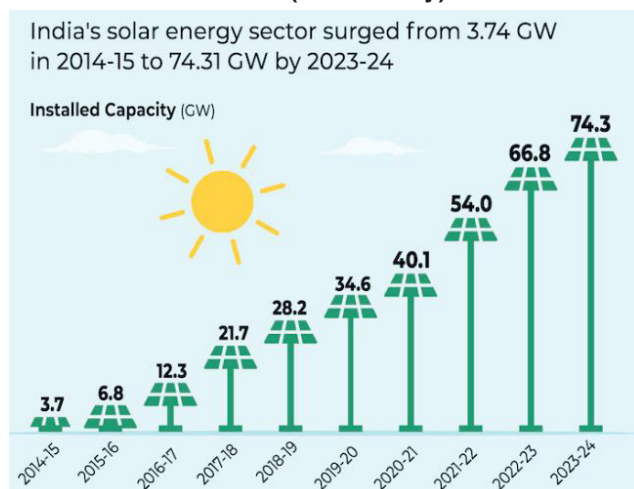
- India's solar waste could reach **600 kilotonnes by 2030** as per a study published by **Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)** in collaboration with the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**.

### Key Findings

- Waste Generation:** India's installed **66.7 gigawatt (GW) capacity, as of FY23**, has generated about **100 kilotonnes (kt)** of cumulative waste, which will increase to **340 kt by 2030**.
  - This volume will increase **32 times by 2050** resulting in about **19000 kt** of cumulative waste.
- States Contribution:** Around **67 percent** of this waste is expected to be generated in five states: **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh**.
  - Rajasthan will account for **24 percent** of the waste generated by 2030, followed by **Gujarat** accounting for **16 percent**, and **Karnataka** accounting for **12 percent**.

### India's Solar Capacity

- Globally, India has emerged as a significant player in renewable energy, ranking **fourth in total renewable power capacity** additions and **fifth in solar power capacity**.
- From 2014 to 2024, India also saw an expansion in its installed capacity for energy generation, increasing from **3.74 GW in FY 2014-15 to 74.31 GW in FY 2023-24 (till January)**.



- It is **slated to jump to 292 GW** of installed solar capacity by **2030**.

### Solar Waste

- Solar waste refers to the **waste generated during the manufacturing of solar modules and waste from the field (project lifetime)**.
- Manufacturing** involves **two streams of waste**, including the scrap that's produced and the waste generated from PV modules failing quality tests.
- Waste from the field involves **three streams of waste**.
  - Waste generated **during transporting and handling** — the damaged modules are considered as waste.
  - Waste produced due to the **damage incurred by solar modules** during their lifetime.
  - When the modules reach their **end-of-life** and are not usable anymore.
- The **study only focused on waste from the field** (project lifetime) category and excluded waste generated during manufacturing.

Figure 2 Multiple streams contribute to solar waste



### Key Recommendations

- The policymakers should maintain a **comprehensive database** of the installed solar capacity, which would help in estimating solar waste in the following years.
- The MoEFCC should **issue guidelines for collecting and storing solar waste**.
  - Furthermore, it should also **promote safe and efficient processing** of stored waste.
- Solar cell and module producers should start **developing waste collection and storage centres** to adhere to the responsibilities assigned in the **E-waste Management Rules 2022**.
- Policymakers should **incentivise recyclers**, and push **stakeholders to effectively manage the growing solar waste**.

### Solar Waste Recycling Methods

- Conventional Recycling or Bulk Material Recycling:** It involves mechanical processes like crushing, sieving, and shearing of the waste.

- While the majority of recycled materials consist of glass, aluminium, and copper, more valuable materials like silver and silicon cannot be recovered through this method.
- High Value Recycling:** It involves the use of a combination of mechanical, chemical, and thermal processes to recycle the modules.
  - Unlike conventional recycling, this method can recover silver and silicon also with the help of chemical processes.

#### India's Solar Waste Management Policy

- The management of waste generated from solar PV modules, panels and cells is part of the **Electronic Waste Management Rules 2022**.
- The rules mandate solar PV module and cell producers to **store the waste** generated from solar PV modules and cells up to 2034 – 2035 as per the guidelines laid down by the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**.
- The rules also mandate the **filing of annual returns** on the e-waste management portal up to 2034 – 2035.
- Every recycler of solar PV modules and cells shall be mandated for the **recovery of materials as laid down by the CPCB**.

Source: IE

## ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN INDIA

### Context

- Inequality is worsening in India** with the **share of top 1%** in total income at new high as per the paper released by World Inequality Lab.

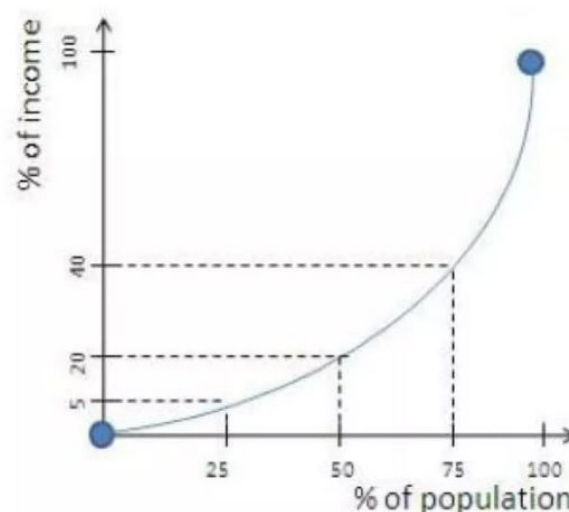
### Major Findings

- Concentration of Wealth:** Wealth is **highly concentrated** even within the top 1 percent.
  - In 2022-23, the **top 1 percent wealth share was 39.5 percent**, 29 percentage points went just to the top 0.1 percent, 22 percentage points to just the top 0.01 percent and 16 percentage points to just the top 0.001 percent.
- Rise over the Years:** In 1961, bottom 50 percent and top 1 per cent shares were identical; by 2022-23, the **top 1 percent share was more than 5 times larger**.

- Lack of Data:** The quality of economic data in India is notably poor and has seen a decline recently. It is therefore likely that these new estimates represent a lower bound to actual inequality levels.

#### Do You Know?

- The **Gini index** is a measure of the **distribution of income across a population**.
- A **higher Gini index** indicates **greater inequality**, with high-income individuals receiving much larger percentages of the population's total income.
- Global inequality, as measured by the Gini index, has **steadily increased** over the **past few centuries** and **spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic**.



### Reasons for Economic Inequality in India

- Historical Factors:** India's history, including colonization and feudalism, has led to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of certain groups.
  - These historical inequalities have persisted over time, influencing wealth distribution patterns.
- Economic Policies:** Economic policies, including liberalization and privatization measures implemented since the 1990s, have spurred economic growth in certain sectors, benefitting those with access to capital and resources.
  - However, these policies have also widened income and wealth inequalities, with the gains of economic growth disproportionately accruing to the wealthy.

- **Urban-Rural Divide:** There exists a significant gap in development between urban and rural areas.
  - ♦ Urban centers tend to attract more investment and offer better job opportunities, leading to the concentration of wealth in these regions.
- **Access to Education and Opportunities:** Disparities in access to education persist, particularly among marginalized communities, exacerbating wealth inequality.
- **Informal Economy:** A significant portion of India's workforce is employed in the informal sector, where workers often lack job security, social protections, and access to formal financial services.
  - ♦ The informal economy perpetuates economic vulnerability and contributes to income disparities.
- **Globalization and Market Forces:** The benefits of globalization have not been evenly distributed, leading to the concentration of wealth among a select group of individuals and corporations that are well-positioned to capitalize on global market trends.

### Suggestions As per the Report

- The paper finds suggestive evidence that the **Indian income tax system** might be **regressive** when viewed from the lens of net wealth.
  - ♦ A **restructuring of the tax code** to account for both **income and wealth**, and broad-based public investments in health, education and nutrition are needed to enable the average Indian, and not just the elites, to meaningfully benefit from the ongoing wave of globalisation.
- A **“super tax” of 2 percent** on the net wealth of the **167 wealthiest families** in 2022-23 would yield **0.5 percent of national income** in revenues and create valuable fiscal space to facilitate such investments.
- Addressing wealth disparity in India requires **comprehensive policy measures** aimed at promoting **inclusive economic growth**, improving access to education and opportunities, addressing social discrimination, combating corruption, and implementing **progressive taxation and wealth redistribution policies**.

Source: IE

## IVF (IN VITRO FERTILIZATION)

### In News

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has sought a report from the Government of Punjab on the in-vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment availed by the late Punjabi singer's mother

### About IVF (in vitro fertilization)

- It is a type of fertility treatment where an egg is removed from the woman's ovaries and fertilised with sperm in a laboratory.
- It's a method used by people who need help achieving pregnancy.
- It is an effective form of assisted reproductive technology (ART).

### Do you Know?

- ART is defined as all techniques used to obtain a pregnancy by handling the sperm or egg cell outside the human body and transferring the embryo into the woman's reproductive tract. These include – sperm donation, in-vitro-fertilisation (IVF) (where the sperm is fertilized in a lab), and gestational surrogacy (child is not biologically related to surrogate).

### Benefits

- IVF can help couples and individuals who are struggling with infertility
- Reduce the chances of miscarriage among females
- High Success Rate of Pregnancy
- Donated Eggs/Sperms Can Be Used

### Risks

- IVF involves large amounts of physical and emotional energy, time, and money.
- Many couples dealing with infertility suffer stress and depression.
- A woman taking fertility medicines may have bloating, abdominal pain, and other side effects.
- IVF, surrogacy and egg donation have become a thriving business

### Recent Debate

- The late singer's mother is 58 but Under Section 21(g)(i) of the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021, the age limit prescribed for a woman going under ART Services is between 21-50 years.

- The birth has also sparked a debate on whether an age limit should be implemented in such cases as people are living longer and have better medical facilities to ensure a good quality of life.
- Some experts argue that the age group of 25-35 years is the best time to conceive with 50-years being a reasonable age limit.
  - ♦ “Aging brings along various ailments, including blood pressure, diabetes and heart diseases, and the child must have reasonable parental support time

### View of WHO

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), infertility is a disease of the male or female reproductive system defined by the failure to achieve a pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse.
- Infertility affects millions of people, and has an impact on their families and communities.
- Estimates suggest that approximately one in every six people of reproductive age worldwide experience infertility in their lifetime.
- It is also maintained that every human being has a right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Individuals and couples have the right to decide the number, timing, and spacing of their children.

### Conclusion

- Infertility can negate the realization of essential human rights.
- Addressing infertility is therefore an important part of realizing the right of individuals and couples to found a family.
- Government policies on IVF treatment can mitigate the financial burden, emotional impact of infertility on family life.
- Benefits planned around preconception, fewer working hours for women under fertility treatment to manage regular visits to doctors, and the emotional and financial aspects of treatment, would help considerably.

Source : TH

## NEWS IN SHORT

### USHA MEHTA

#### In News

- The historical biography that tells the story of Usha Mehta came out on Amazon Prime

#### About Usha Mehta

- She was born on 25 March 1920, in Gujarat.
- She was popularly known as Ushaben.
- She began participating in the freedom struggle at the young age of 8.
- Her first political experiences were from a public meeting held at her native village of **Saras in Surat to denounce the all-White Simon Commission.**
- She is well known for organizing the **Congress Radio.**
  - ♦ an underground radio station which operated during the Quit India Movement in 1942.
  - ♦ The radio broadcasted recorded messages from Gandhiji, nationalistic songs, and stirring speeches by revolutionaries and other eminent leaders from across India.
  - ♦ Always it used to commence with the song “Hindustan Hamara” and close with “ Vande Mataram”.

#### Other roles

- When the Civil Disobedience Movement broke out four years later, she energetically threw herself into the struggle, defying not just the Salt tax, but also participating in picketing, protest marches, and spinning the Khadi cloth.
- Usha Mehta was also present at the famous A.I.C.C session held at Bombay (Mumbai), on 7th and 8th August, 1942, when Mahatma Gandhi delivered his powerful ‘Quit India’ Speech.

Source : IE

### ASBESTOS

#### Context:

- Recently, the United States’ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a comprehensive ban on all forms of the deadly carcinogen asbestos.

### About the Asbestos:



- It is a **naturally occurring mineral**, has been widely used in various industries due to its heat and **chemical resistance, tensile strength, and insulating properties**.
- However, it is a known **carcinogen**, and exposure to it can lead to serious health issues, including **lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis**, and it is linked to more than 40,000 deaths in the US each year.

### The Global Scenario:

- Currently, more than 65 countries, including the US, have **imposed bans or severe restrictions** on its use.
  - ♦ It continues to be used in many other countries, including India.

### The Indian Context:

- India **banned asbestos mining in 1993**. However, there is no law in the country that prevents its use in construction, import, or trade.
- As a result, asbestos is widely used in everything from cement to brake parts.
  - ♦ In fact, **India accounted for nearly half of global asbestos imports in 2021**.
- In India, in the coming decades, more than 6 million people could have an asbestos-related disease, including more than 600,000 cancer cases.

Source: DTE

## WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2024

### Context

- **World Happiness Report 2024** has been released by the **United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network**.

### About

- It is released **annually** and takes into **account six variables** — GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, having someone to count on, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and freedom from corruption.
- It is supported by taking the **average life evaluation data** gathered by the Gallup polls for the 2021-23 period.

### Findings

- **Finland topped** the list for the seventh year in a row, followed by **Denmark, Iceland and Sweden**. **Israel** too made it to the top five of the ranking.
- **Afghanistan** was deemed as the **least happy country**, after Congo, Sierra Leone, Lesotho and Lebanon.
- **India** ranked **126th same as last year**, China ranked 60th, Nepal at 93, Pakistan at 108, Myanmar at 118, Sri Lanka at 128 and Bangladesh at 129th spots.

Source: IE

### INVITS

### In News

- National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) completed the third round of funding through its infrastructure investment trust (InvITs).

### About Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvITs)

- It is a Collective Investment Scheme similar to a mutual fund, which enables direct investment of money from individual and institutional investors in infrastructure projects to earn a small portion of the income as return.
- The InvIT is designed as a tiered structure with Sponsor setting up the InvIT which in turn invests into the eligible infrastructure projects either directly or via special purpose vehicles (SPVs).
- The InvITs are regulated by the SEBI (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014.

Source : LM

## E-SHRAM PORTAL

### In News

- The Supreme Court directed states and Union territories (UTs) to provide ration cards to all migrant labourers registered with the e-Shram portal within two months.



### More about the News

- The authorities have failed to comply with the court's April 20, 2023 directions by which it had granted three months' time to them to provide ration cards to the labourers.
- Out of around 29 crore registrants on the e-shram portal, around 8 crore do not have ration cards and do not receive subsidized food grains under National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013.

### e-Shram portal

- The portal was launched in 2021 with the aim of creating a national database of unorganized workers (NDUW).
- It helps to implement social security services for unorganized workers.
- The portal uses Aadhaar to deliver social security benefits and ensure that the benefits are portable to migrant and construction workers at their workplaces.

Source: PIB

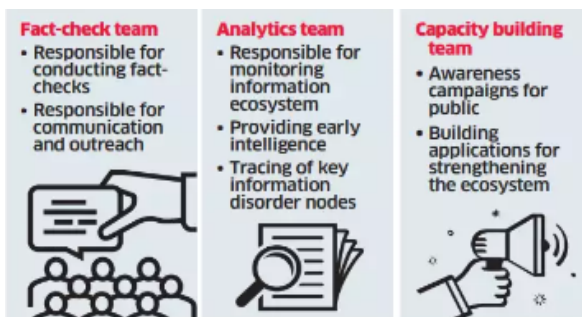
## FACT CHECK UNIT (FCU)

### Context:

- Recently, the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology notified the Fact Check Unit (FCU) **under IT Rules of 2021** to monitor online content.

### About the FCU:

- It was established **under the Press Information Bureau (PIB)** and started its operations in 2019.



- It aims to act as a **deterrent to creators and disseminators of fake news and misinformation**.
- It provides people with an easy avenue to report suspicious and questionable information pertaining to the Government of India for fact-checking.

### The Role of FCU:

- The FCU is tasked with identifying **'fake news'** published online related to the government.
- Content marked by the FCU as **'fake or misleading'** will have to be taken down by online intermediaries if they wish to enjoy legal immunity against third-party content.



- However, it raises **concerns** about potential impacts on **press freedom** and the **government's role as an arbiter of truth**.

### The Process of Fact Checking:

- The FCU follows a **two-step process** to evaluate any received information.
  - The received complaints are researched against authoritative Government sources like websites, press releases, government social media accounts, etc.
  - The FCU then checks complaints with the concerned Ministry and creates content fit for social media.

Source: TH

## PRECISION ONCOLOGY

### Context

- Developments in **precision oncology** require cancers to be **classified based on their genetic characteristics** rather than the organ in which they originate.

### About

- Traditional approaches to treating cancer – including surgery and radiation – **target the organs in which the tumour is present.**
  - ♦ This practice formed the basis of **classifying cancers after the organ** in which they originate.
- Development in **precision oncology requires cancers to be classified based on their molecular and genetic characteristics** rather than the organ in which they originate.
- **Significance:** It will reduce the time needed to run clinical trials.
  - ♦ A trial for a drug targeting a particular genetic mutation will cover all cancer types with those mutations.
- **Challenges:** The proposed change for classifying cancers can't happen unless patients can access tests that reveal molecular alterations in their tumour.
  - ♦ These tests currently cost Rs 7,000-40,000 in Indian labs and up to Rs 3 lakh abroad.

Source: TH

## NEGATIVE INTEREST RATES

### In News

- Recently, **Japan ended its negative interest rate policy**, as the Bank of Japan has raised its key interest rates, stepping away from the country's negative interest rate policy.

### What are negative interest rates?

- The term negative interest rate refers to **interest paid to borrowers rather than to lenders.** Negative interest rates are when **central banks make their commercial counterparts pay to park their excess cash** at the institution.
- This method is usually adopted **during deflationary periods** when consumers hold too

much money instead of spending as they wait for a turnaround in the economy.

- **Consumers may expect their money to be worth more tomorrow** than today during these periods. When this happens, the economy can experience a sharp decline in demand, causing prices to plummet even lower.
- Experts believe that in order to avoid the charges for parking the cash, banks use the money to **lend more to businesses and consumers, which, in turn, helps financial growth.**
- These negative interest rates were first introduced by **Swedish Riksbank in 2009.** This was followed by others such as the central banks of Denmark, Switzerland and then Japan.

### Why did Japan introduce negative interest rates?

- It was a new measure introduced by Tokyo in its **long battle against deflation, or declining prices.**
- The Bank of Japan had hoped that by introducing negative interest rates **it would encourage spending and inflation in an ageing society** with a negative population growth.
- Moreover, the authorities believed that it would **help in keeping the country's debt repayments manageable.** Japan's national debt has floated above 100 percent of its GDP, making it the most indebted nation on the planet.

### So, did negative interest rates help Japan?

- According to a Bloomberg report, they may have **helped prevent deeper deflation in the economy.** However, during the COVID-19 pandemic and the fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine, it affected the economy.
- Some experts also note that the **prolonged use of such negative interest rates have cut into banks' profitability and helped push down the value of the yen.**

