

## **New guidelines for remission**

- As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, the special remission would be granted to a certain category of prisoners, and they would be released in three phases August 15, 2022, January 26, 2023 and August 15, 2023.
- The prisoners who would qualify for premature release under the scheme are women and transgender convicts of ages 50 and above and male convicts of 60 and above who have completed 50% of their total sentence period without counting the period of general remission earned.
- Convicts with disabilities Among others eligible for remission are physically challenged or disabled convicts with 70% disability and more who have completed 50% of their total sentence period, terminally ill convicts, Convicted prisoners who have completed two thirds (66%) of their total sentence and poor or indigent prisoners who have completed their sentence but are still in jail due to non-payment of fine imposed on them by waiving off the fine.
- The Ministry said that persons who committed an offence at a young age (18-21) and with no other criminal involvement or case against them and who have completed 50% of their sentence period would also be eligible for the remission.
- The age of the convicts should be determined on the basis of the matriculation or birth certificate.
- Persons convicted with death sentence or where death sentence has been commuted to life imprisonment or persons convicted for an offence for which punishment of death has been specified as one of the punishments would not be eligible for the grant of special remission.
- Persons convicted with sentence of life imprisonment, convicts involved in terrorist activities or persons convicted under the Terrorist and Disruptive (Prevention) Act, 1985, Prevention of Terrorist Act, 2002, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, Explosives Act, 1908, National Security Act, 1982, Official Secrets Act, 1923, and Anti-Hijacking Act, 2016, would not be eligible.
- The States and the Union Territories were told to constitute a State-level screening committee comprising the Home Secretary, Law Secretary, Director or Inspector General of Prisons to examine the cases of eligible persons.

## Food fortification

- Centre had started the second phase of distribution of fortified rice from April 1.
- A total of 90 districts have been covered, and the Centre is targeting 291 districts, he added.
- The scheme, started in October 2021, aims to supply fortified rice to beneficiaries of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman, or PM-POSHAN, scheme.
- The health risks involved in the consumption of fortified rice, which has added nutrients, and the warnings experts had given to the Centre against such a scheme,
- Although the benefits far outweighed the harmful effects.
- What is food fortification?
- Fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of one or more micronutrients (i.e., vitamins and minerals) in a food or condiment to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- As well as increasing the nutritional content of staple foods, the addition of micronutrients can help to restore the micronutrient content lost during processing.
- Fortification is an evidence-informed intervention that contributes to the prevention, reduction and control of micronutrient deficiencies.
- It can be used to correct a demonstrated micronutrient deficiency in the general population (mass or large-scale fortification) or in specific population groups (targeted fortification) such as children, pregnant women and the beneficiaries of social protection programmes.
- When the vitamins and minerals are not added to the foods during the processing but just before consumption at home or at schools or child-care facilities, it is called point-of-use fortification.
- **Demolition drive and international law**
- The right to housing is not only a fundamental right recognised under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, it is also a well-documented right under the international human rights law framework, which is binding on India.
- International law also prohibits arbitrary interference in an individual's right to property.
- For instance, Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "no one shall be

subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation”.

- . For instance, Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care...”.
- Likewise, Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognises “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”
- The above identified international human rights law has been judicially incorporated by the Supreme Court of India into the Indian legal system.
- **Right to repair**
- The U.S. state of New York recently passed the Fair Repair Act, which requires manufacturers to supply repair information, tools, and parts to independent repair shops and not just their own stores or partners.
- This provides consumers with the right to repair and refurbish their purchased goods
- . With access to relevant tools and repair manuals, independent repair shops will finally be able to compete with manufacturers.
- While this is a victory for consumer rights, privacy, security and quality concerns along with blatant intellectual property (IP) rights violations of the manufacturers cannot be side-lined.
- Manufacturers claim that the quality and functioning of the product might be adversely affected if they allow repairs by consumers and third parties
- Additionally, manufacturers can sign a non-disclosure agreement to protect the IP with the certified repairers/businesses.
- Customers with access to genuine parts may also approach independent repair providers who may not offer the original manufacturer’s warranty but their own warranty.
- Manufacturers reduce the durability of the product, compelling consumers to either repurchase the product or get it repaired at exorbitant prices affixed by the manufacturers.

- Specifically, this tramples upon the right to obtain information about the quality of the product, the right to procure products at reasonable prices, and the right to seek redress against unscrupulous practices.
- When read closely, the 'right to repair' can be said to be implicit in Section 2(9) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- This warrants some relief. Its apparent disregard merits an explicit insertion of a 'right to repair' clause in the said provision.
- The New York legislation is a reminder that it is time to not only acknowledge the right to repair of consumers but also respond to the corresponding rights of the manufacturers.
- This warrants some expedited policy changes to recognise the 'right to repair', be it through amendments in the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 or through a separate law.
- **Global food crisis**
- The crisis can emerge in the form of food shortages, trade disruptions, a rise and spread in hunger and poverty levels, a depletion of foreign exchange reserves for net food importing countries, a strain on a nation's fiscal resources due to an increase in spending on food safety nets, a threat to peace, and even social unrest in some places.
- Recent spike in food prices which has been triggered by supply disruptions due to COVID-19 and further aggravated by the Russia-Ukraine war.
- Some other important factors that have also contributed to a rise in food prices and the build-up of price shocks can be discerned from the trade patterns and composition of the usage of food commodities.
- The current food price spike first began in vegetable oils and then expanded to cereals.
- The trade patterns of these commodities show that around 38% of the vegetable oil produced and consumed is globally traded.
- In the case of wheat, dependence on trade to meet global demand forms 25%, while only one tenth of rice output or consumption is traded.
- Trade dependence for maize is 16%.
- It is evident then that the effect of global trade disruption will be higher for commodities that are traded more and vice-versa.
- The proportion of vegetable oil used for biodiesel increased from 1% in 2003 to 11% in 2011; it went up to more than 15% in 2021. This is further related to energy prices.

- When crude prices increase beyond a certain level it becomes economical to use oilseeds and grains for biodiesel and ethanol, respectively.
- The second reason for the use of food crops for biofuel is the mandates to increase the share of renewable energy resources.
- Food prices are also expected to go up in the current and next harvest season because of an increase in the prices of fertilizer and other agrochemicals.
- Implications for India Export and import in the agriculture sector constituted 13% of gross value added in agriculture during 2020-21.
- Therefore, some transmission of an increase in global prices on domestic prices is inevitable. (Transmission of international prices to domestic prices can be prevented only if there is no trade.)
- This transmission of global prices to the domestic market can be moderated through trade policy and other instruments.
- This is precisely what India has been doing to balance the interests of producers and consumers and in protecting the economy against excessive volatility in international prices.
- Wheat export restrictions
- The recent ban on wheat exports and restrictions on the export of other food commodities by India need to be seen in the light of an abnormal situation created by spikes in international prices.
- Some experts see it as a setback to India's image as a reliable exporter as this move is seen to disrupt (regular) export channels.
- **Global impact**
  - The Green Revolution technology which spread in developing countries from the 1970s to the 1990s helped in keeping food prices low and relatively stable.
  - As the steam of Green Revolution technology slowed down with the start of the 21st century, food prices began increasing in real terms.
  - The world requires new breakthroughs such as Green Revolution technology, for large-scale adoption in order to enable checks on food prices rising at a faster rate.
  - This in turn requires increased spending on agriculture research and development (especially by the

public sector and multilateral development agencies).

- There is a need to strengthen and rejuvenate the global agri-research system under the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) which is heading towards disarray.
- Biofuel protocols have contributed to the global food crisis for the second time in the last 15 years.
- Diversion of land under food crops and food output for biofuel should be carefully calibrated with implications for food availability.

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