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# Daily Current Affairs



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# Kerala: an exemplary story in palliative care

## PALLIATIVE CARE

Source: The Hindu, 18 May 2023



### Category:

➤ **GS-3**

### What is palliative care?

- WHO considers palliative care as an approach to improve the quality of life of patients and families confronting life threatening illness such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease etc.
- It prevents and relieves suffering through the early identification, correct assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual.
- In major cases, only 20% pain is medical and 80% is social.

**A**chapan (70) lives with his wife, daughter, and his grandson atop a hill in Wayanad, Kerala. He built his two-room house through a State housing scheme for Scheduled Tribes. He worked as a daily-wage labourer till he had a stroke at his work site in 2009. Since then, he has had multiple episodes of hospitalisation. For follow-ups and medicines, Achapan walked at least 12 km through the hilly terrain to the nearest government medical facility. In 2018, a Wayanad-based community palliative care organisation arranged weekly home visits by a nurse and a volunteer team for Achapan. They provide free medicines and doctor visits when required. In these ways, the community organisation provides 'total care.'

### A global exemplar

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers palliative care as an approach to improve the quality of life of patients and families confronting life-threatening illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The 2018 Lancet Commission on palliative care and pain relief refers to such conditions as 'serious health-related suffering' that requires physical, social, spiritual, and emotional support alongside medical intervention. More than 80% of individuals who experienced serious health-related suffering in 2015 were from low- and middle-income countries. As a middle-income country with an ageing population and a growing non-communicable disease burden, how equipped is India to deal with large-scale serious health-related sufferings? Quite poorly as India struggles with approximately 4% coverage for palliative care unevenly anchored around mega cities. In sharp contrast with the rest of India, Kerala's palliative care model is a global exemplar in inclusive care infrastructure.



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Kerala shows how diverse groups of people — across religious, caste, class, and gender divides — forged solidarities to create care infrastructure

In 1993, Dr. M.R. Rajagopal and his student, Dr. Suresh Kumar, experimented with a pain relief clinic for terminally-ill cancer patients at the Government Medical College, Kozhikode. This experiment mushroomed over the years into more than 400 community palliative care organisations across Kerala, driven by volunteers and nurses, with doctors' home care on a need-basis. Volunteers from diverse social groups looked beyond terminal cancer, including what was then considered unconventional conditions for palliative care such as spinal injuries, HIV/AIDS, and geriatric cases. Volunteers also understood the social suffering of families in their neighbourhood when confronted with such conditions. An early volunteer reflected that "where doctors know symptoms, volunteers understand suffering". The community identified that "the patient's suffering is 20% medical, 80% social" and reframed care. Community ownership brought in home-based 'total care', i.e., medical, social, financial, bereavement, and rehabilitative support for patients and families. Kerala was experimenting with a community model distinct in scale and scope from hospital-based approaches in the rest of the world.

By 2004, community organisers felt the need for the State's involvement. What began as the Pariraksha project with Malappuram panchayats cascaded into a landmark palliative care policy introduced by the Left Democratic Front government in 2008. Over time, all 14 districts provided palliative care, with mandates at the primary, community, and tertiary levels.

Certainly, an evolving healthcare field creates new challenges. For example, metrics for evaluating palliative care delivery are primarily developed for hospitals and hospices in the Global North. Public health integration remains uneven across Kerala. Nevertheless, through 30

years of this evolving model, we now see the societal consequences and spin-offs. As per the 2018 Lancet report, Kerala has a network of over 841 of India's 908 palliative care sites — one of the largest palliative networks in the world.

Further, community mental health initiatives have spun off from Kerala's palliative care movement. Kerala mobilised palliative networks for relief work during the 2018 floods. It was arguably the only Indian State where the government routinely referenced palliative care during COVID-19 briefings. Overall, Kerala's community palliative care model merits attention as a global exemplar, not just for healthcare, but also for broader social and public innovations.

### Practice implications

Firstly, only 14% of patients who need palliative care worldwide receive it, highlighting the limited access and affordability of hospitals and hospices. Kerala's community model covers more than 60% of the patients. The Institute of Palliative Medicine in Kozhikode and Pallium India in Thiruvananthapuram are nodal organisations offering training informed by the community approach for doctors, nurses, and volunteers. Second, public health palliative care integration debunks myths about the "impossibility of public health infrastructure in India" or that "the State cannot deliver healthcare".

The State and the community created possibilities for the private sector, creating a 'crowding-in effect.' Here, private healthcare must offer better standards than public and community organisations for patients to choose the former. Finally, the Kerala story exemplifies how diverse groups of people — across religious, caste, and gender divides — forged solidarities to create care infrastructure. These community organisations are strong reminders of how people organise across differences.

- More than **80% individuals** suffering from such illnesses are from the **low and middle income countries**.
- India belonging to middle income group is threatened equally by such non communicable diseases.
- Only **14% individuals** across the globe in need of palliative care receive it.
- In India, only **4% individuals** have been covered under palliative care, mostly around urban centers.

### Challenges in delivering palliative care:

- Lack of awareness.
- Skilled human force in delivering such services.
- Associated social constrictions etc.

### Government initiatives:

- National Programme for palliative care.

### Use case:

- Kerala's example in delivering palliative care through its community palliative care organization model (**Pariraksha Project of the Kerala govt in 2004**).



# FERTILIZER SUBSIDY FOR ONGOING KHARIF SEASON

Source: The Hindu, 18 May 2023



## Cabinet gives approval for fertilizer subsidy of ₹1.08 lakh crore for kharif

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

With fertilizer prices continuing to remain high due to global factors – such as a fall in production and hiked logistics costs, especially due to the Ukraine situation – the Centre expects this year's fertilizer subsidy to cross ₹2.25 lakh crore. Accordingly, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a ₹1.08 lakh crore subsidy for the ongoing kharif or monsoon season, Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya said.

Out of this, ₹38,000 crore will subsidise phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizers, while ₹70,000 crore will go toward the urea subsidy.

Last year, the total fertilizer subsidy was about ₹2.56 lakh crore.

Mr. Mandaviya told journalists that the Centre would ensure that the prices of urea and diammonium phosphate (DAP) would remain unchanged during the season. At pre-



**Farm incentives:** The fertilizer subsidy for one hectare is about ₹8,900, the government has said. FILE PHOTO

sent, the subsidised rate of urea is ₹276 per bag and the price of DAP is ₹1,350 per bag. The decision will benefit about 12 crore farmers, the Minister added.

The total consumption of urea in the country is about 325 to 350 lakh tonnes (lt). Apart from this, 100 to 125 lt of DAP; 100 to 125 lt of NPK; and 50 to 60 lt of muriate of potash (MoP) are also sold in the country. "Farmers should get fertilizers on time. They should not be burdened at a time international prices are high," he said.

The Minister said that the fertilizer subsidy usually ranged between ₹1 lakh crore and ₹1.25 lakh crore. "Last year, it was ₹2.56 lakh crore," he said, adding that as cultivation takes place on 1,400 lakh hectares of land across the country, the fertilizer subsidy for one hectare is ₹8,909. "We have 12 crore farmers and one farmer gets ₹21,223 subsidy," he said.

The actual price of a bag of DAP was ₹4,000, Mr. Mandaviya said. "But for farmers, the rate is ₹1,350 per bag. ₹2,461 per bag is the subsidy," he explained.

### Category:

- Prelims
- GS-3

### Context:

- High fertilizer prices due to global factors due to **Russia-Ukraine war**.
- Fertilizers used in India: Urea, DAP (Diammonium Phosphate), NPK (Nitrogen Phosphorus Potassium), MoP (Muriate of Potash).
- Fertilizer subsidy has resulted in excessive use of fertilizers by the farmers.

### Issues because of fertiliser subsidy:

- Imbalance of nutrients.
- Excessive use of few highly subsidized fertilizers leading to deteriorating soil health.
- Issue of leakage.
- Impact on govt revenues (fiscal situation).

### Government initiatives:

- Nutrient based subsidy scheme.
- New Urea Policy
- Neem coating of Urea.

# Iran, Russia ink deal to complete major transport network

Agence France-Presse  
TEHRAN

Iran and Russia agreed on Wednesday to collaborate on the construction of the final part of a commercial transport network linking to the Gulf and India while avoiding Western sea lanes.

Iranian Transport Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash, who signed the agreement with his Russian counterpart in Tehran, said the 164-kilometre railway in Iran's north would be completed within three years.

It is the only missing link in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) from northeast Russia via Azerbaijan to Iran's southern coastline and on to India by sea.

Russia and Iran are both under international sanctions that restrict trade.

The freight network of ship, rail and road routes, which covers some 7,200 kilometres, avoids the Suez Canal between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea which would otherwise transport some Russian seaborne cargo.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who attended the signing ceremony, and Russia's Vladimir Putin, who spoke there via video-conference, both hailed the economic opportunities the agreement presents.

The planned railroad would connect Rasht, a city in northern Iran, and the Astara crossing on the border with Azerbaijan.

## INTERNATIONAL NORTH SOUTH TRANSPORT CORRIDOR (INSTC)



Source: The Hindu, 18 May 2023

### Category:

➤ **GS-2**

- **INSTC** is an initiative by **India, Iran and Russia (trilateral agreement signed in 2000)**.
- INSTC's major goal is to reduce both transit time and cost for freight movement.
- **7,200 km** multi-modal transport corridor combining **road, rail and maritime routes** connecting **Russia and India via Central Asia and Iran**.
- **13 countries** have so far ratified this agreement (**Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Armenia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine**).
- INSTC gives thrust to India's "**Connect Central Asia**" Policy (India acceded to the **Ashgabat Agreement** in the year **2018**).

### Significance of the corridor:

- Easy access to **Central Asian markets**.
- Alternative route to **Suez Canal**.
- Bypassing Pakistan to reach Central Asia.
- Counterbalancing China's rise (**BRI**).
- Increase in export opportunities.

### Challenges to INSTC:

- Lack of **funds and infrastructure**.
- **Security threat**.
- Lack of cooperation among parties (conflict between member states).

# India, EU explore ways to resolve 'carbon border tax'

**Priram Lakshman**  
LONDON

India and the EU are working to resolve a looming hurdle in their trade relationship, the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), with the two sides discussing it during a Minister-level meeting in Brussels this week. The EU is India's second-largest trading partner as well as its second-largest export market.

The EU describes the CBAM as a 'landmark tool' that places a 'fair price' on carbon emitted during the production of goods that are entering the EU and a mechanism to "encourage cleaner industrial production" outside the EU.

The CBAM regulations came into effect on May 16 and will begin their transitional phase of implementation on October 1.

An Indian delegation led by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar discussed the tax during a visit to Brussels for bilateral meetings and the first edition of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC).

The TTC said in a statement that the two parties would "intensify their engagement to address the issues that emerge in implementation" of the CBAM.

The two sides "remain engaged" and are discussing the issue, Mr. Goyal said following the meeting on Tuesday.

"And we have a long time ahead of us within which we'll be working together to find the right solutions to this," he said, during a press conference of the ministers and their EU counterparts – EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager and



Union Minister Piyush Goyal with Thierry Breton, EU Commissioner for Internal Market, in Brussels. ANI

Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis.

"I am sure the intention is not to create a barrier to trade," Mr. Goyal said, emphasising that the measure was about sustainability.

For their part, the EU officials asserted that the mechanism did not run afoul of WTO rules.

"We were of course very careful to ensure WTO compatibility of the initiative," Mr. Dombrovskis said. "And a key word for this is 'non-discrimination'. So we apply the same price of carbon to imported goods that we are going to apply also on our domestic producers," the EU official added.

## 'Steel, aluminium'

"There are about six-seven commodities on which the EU has proposed carbon taxes, of which the two sectors where India is likely to feel some impact is steel and aluminium," a senior Commerce Ministry official said in New Delhi. "In the rest of the areas, we don't export much to Europe," he added.

The ministry is still calculating the likely monetary impact as the EU has prescribed different mechanisms of imposing carbon tax. "For example, in

steel manufacturing through electric arc furnace and blast furnace, the carbon border tax will be different. So an assessment of how much of steel is going out of which furnace – that segregation has to be done. That will take some time. It will definitely impact to some degree," the official said.

While the move will likely impact less than 2% of India's exports, the government is examining the extent to which the overall carbon tax and the differential tax treatment proposed for instance, for steel using different furnace technologies, is compatible with WTO (World Trade Organisation) norms, said another official. "The verification process could be very complex and tedious and mutual recognition agreements will be vital," the second official noted.

The first meeting of the TTC included working groups covering Strategic Technologies, Digital Governance and Digital Connectivity; Green and Clean Energy Technologies; and Trade, Investment and Resilient Value Chains.

In a joint statement, the two sides listed the progress made and said that an MoU on semiconductors would be concluded by September 2023. Mr. Goyal said the TTC would supplement trade deal talks between India and the EU and that it would help make the relationship "the defining partnership of the 21st Century". The Working Group on trade discussed resilient value chains, market access issues, screening of FDI and multilateral trade issues.

(With additional reporting by Vikas Dhoot in New Delhi)

## CARBON BORDER TAX

Source: The Hindu, 18 May 2023



### Category:

- Prelims
- GS-2
- GS-3

### Context:

- India, EU explore ways to resolve **Carbon Border Tax**.

### What is Carbon Border Tax?

- Introduced by EU, it is an import duty placed on carbon emitted during production of goods which enter EU. This is basically a mechanism to encourage cleaner industrial production outside EU.
- Majorly imposed on **six-seven commodities**.
- Component of **European Green deal**.

### Issues in implementation:

- Opposition from major economies (**BASIC grouping**).
- In contravention to the **Rio Declaration**.
- Termed as protectionist policy etc.

### India's position:

- **EU is India's second largest trading partner**. India to feel its impact majorly on **two sectors: steel and aluminium**.
- Likely to impact less than **2% export**.