World Radiography Day – 8 November 2026: 131 years since Röntgen discovered X-rays

Topics: Important Days · UPSC Prelims · TNPSC · SSC · Current Affairs



News

World Radiography Day is observed every 8 November to mark Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen's discovery of X-rays at the University of Würzburg, Germany, on 8 November 1895. The International Society of Radiographers and Radiological Technologists (ISRRT) has observed the day since 2007. It raises awareness of radiographers' role in medical imaging and radiotherapy, and of keeping patients' radiation dose to the necessary minimum. 8 November 2026 is the 131st anniversary of the discovery. No ISRRT theme for 2026 could be confirmed; the UK's Society of Radiographers (SoR) is focusing on 'Professionalism in Radiography'. On the same day, the 15th International Day of Radiology, led by the European Society of Radiology (ESR), is dedicated to emergency radiology.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Date	8 November (annual)
Marks	Discovery of X-rays – 8 Nov 1895, Würzburg, Germany
Discoverer	Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (1845–1923)
Nobel	First Nobel Prize in Physics – 1901

Point	Details
Observed by	ISRRT – since 2007
2026 theme	No ISRRT theme confirmed
Same day	15th International Day of Radiology (ESR) – emergency radiology
Indian regulator	AERB – 15 Nov 1983, Atomic Energy Act 1962; Mumbai
Named after him	Element 111 – roentgenium (Rg)

Background

- History: while testing a Crookes–Hittorf tube, Röntgen noticed a nearby screen coated with barium platinocyanide glowing. He called the unknown rays 'X'. About six weeks later he X-rayed his wife Anna Bertha's hand. He declined to patent the discovery so that society could benefit. In 1901 he received the first Nobel Prize in Physics.
- Science: X-rays are very short-wavelength electromagnetic waves – ionising radiation – produced when fast electrons strike a metal target. Dense tissue such as bone absorbs more and appears white on film. CT, mammography and fluoroscopy use X-rays; MRI (magnetic field + radio waves) and ultrasound (sound waves) are non-ionising.
- Regulation in India: the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) was constituted on 15 November 1983 under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962; HQ Anushaktinagar, Mumbai. It regulates medical X-ray equipment including CT, C-arm and mammography – type approval, room layout and shielding, licensing and worker dose limits. MRI and ultrasound are outside its purview as they emit no ionising radiation.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu: an X-ray unit was bought for the General Hospital, Madras as early as 1900 – within five years of Röntgen's discovery; (confirmed by Madras Musings). Madras Medical College's departmental web page calls it the first X-ray outfit in South East Asia; this claim could not be confirmed in news media. Captain T.W. Barnard was appointed in 1920 to organise the radiology service; a temporary institute opened on 17 March 1922 and a new building on 26 March 1934. It is today's Barnard Institute of Radiology and Oncology (so named since 1988), part of Madras Medical College / Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

World Radiography Day is observed every 8 November to mark Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen's discovery of X-rays at the University of Würzburg, Germany, on 8 November 1895. The International Society of Radiographers and Radiological Technologists (ISRRT) has observed the day since 2007.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Date: 8 November (annual); Marks: Discovery of X-rays – 8 Nov 1895, Würzburg, Germany; Discoverer: Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (1845–1923); Nobel: First Nobel Prize in Physics – 1901.

What is the background to this news?

History: while testing a Crookes–Hittorf tube, Röntgen noticed a nearby screen coated with barium platinocyanide glowing.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. At which German university was Röntgen working when he discovered X-rays on 8 November 1895?

A) Würzburg

B) Göttingen

C) Heidelberg

D) Berlin

Answer: A – Explanation: University of Würzburg. Seeing a barium platinocyanide screen glow, he named the unknown rays 'X'.

2. For discovering X-rays, Röntgen won the first Nobel Prize (1901) in which field?

A) Chemistry

B) Medicine

C) Peace

D) Physics

Answer: D – Explanation: Physics. That year Chemistry went to van 't Hoff and Medicine to von Behring (diphtheria antitoxin). Element 111, roentgenium, honours him.

3. Which body licenses medical X-ray and CT equipment for radiation safety in India?

A) BARC

B) AERB

C) ICMR

D) CDSCO

Answer: B – Explanation: AERB (Mumbai) – set up in 1983; now statutory under the SHANTI Act 2025. BARC is a research centre; CDSCO regulates drug and device quality.

4. Chennai's Barnard Institute of Radiology and Oncology, named after Capt. T.W. Barnard, is part of which medical college?

A) Stanley Medical College

B) CMC, Vellore

C) Madras Medical College

D) Kilpauk Medical College

Answer: C – Explanation: Madras Medical College / Rajiv Gandhi Govt General Hospital. The hospital got an X-ray unit as early as 1900; the institute began in 1922, new building 1934.

5. Which of these medical imaging methods does NOT use ionising radiation?

A) CT scan

B) Mammography

C) MRI

D) Fluoroscopy

Answer: C – Explanation: MRI uses a strong magnetic field and radio waves, so it is outside AERB's purview. CT, mammography and fluoroscopy are X-ray methods.

Sources: ISRRT; Society of Radiographers; ESR; AERB; Madras Musings; Madras Medical College. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.