



# PIB, THE HINDU Newspaper and Editorial Current Affairs

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## World Tuberculosis (TB) Day

### **Background**

- India has been engaged in Tuberculosis (TB control activities for more than 50 years). Yet TB continues to be India's severest health crisis.
- TB kills an estimated 480,000 Indians every year and more than 1,400 every day. India also has more than a million 'missing' cases every year that are not notified and most remain either undiagnosed or unaccountably and inadequately diagnosed and treated in the private sector.
- This tragic loss of life, continued suffering, poverty need to end with concerted efforts from all of us.
- India is now better prepared to address TB better than ever before. It possesses advanced and effective interventions and technologies for diagnosis, treatment and care of TB. This NSP for 2017- 25 for TB elimination in India (NSP) embraces these opportunities to leverage its full potential and proposes transformational changes to TB care service delivery.
- Over the last NS period, we made significant gains in strengthening the support structures, programme architecture and implementation environment for TB control.
- This includes mandatory notification of all TB cases, integration of the programme with the general health services (National Health Mission), expansion of diagnostics services, programmatic management of drug resistant TB (PMDT) service expansion, single window service for TB-HIV cases, national drug resistance surveillance and revision of partnership guidelines.
- However, we have to recognize that more needs to be done to drastically reduce the TB incidence in India. We need aspirational

objectives, a thoughtful and structured approach and a supportive environment.

- The NSP 2017-2025 builds on the success and learnings of the last NSP and encapsulates the bold and innovative steps required to eliminate TB in India by 2030.
- It is crafted in line with other health sector strategies and global efforts, such as the draft National Health Policy 2015, World Health Organization's (WHO) End TB Strategy, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN).

### **The NSP for TB elimination 2017 -2025**

- The NSP for TB elimination 2017-25 is a framework to guide the activities of all stakeholders including the national and state governments, development partners, civil society organizations, international agencies, research institutions, private sector, and many others whose work is relevant to TB elimination in India.
- The NSP 2017-2025 which builds on the success and learnings of the last NSP, and articulates the bold and innovative steps required to move towards TB elimination, is a 3 year costed plan and a 8 year strategy document.
- It provides goals and strategies for the country's response to the disease during the period 2017 to 2025 and aims to direct the attention of all stakeholders on the most important interventions or activities that the RNTCP believes will bring about significant changes in the incidence, prevalence and mortality of TB.
- These strategies and interventions are in addition to the processes and activities already ongoing in the country.
- As a strategic document, the subsequent operational plans will necessarily follow. The NSP will guide the development of the national project implementation plan (PIP) and state PIPs, as well as district health action plans (DHAP) under the national health mission (NHM).
- This NSP replaces previous strategies, and will inform and guide the technical and operational guidelines refresh and associated programme tools modifications.
- The development of this NSP has been a collaborative effort between all the stakeholders including national and state governments,

development partners, civil society organizations, and private sector in India which was led by the Central TB Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

- Knowledge and insights generated from a series of workshops and consultations with the 6 stakeholders, learnings from the implementation of the past NSP and experiences from the pilots, models and approaches tested over the last NSP period informed the strategies proposed in the current NSP.

## **Vision, Goals and Targets of NSP**

The NSP proposes bold strategies with commensurate resources to rapidly decline TB in the country by 2030 in line with the global End TB targets and Sustainable Development Goal's to attain the vision of a TB-free India.

**VISION:** TB-Free India with zero deaths, disease and poverty due to tuberculosis

**GOAL:** To achieve a rapid decline in burden of TB, morbidity and mortality while working towards elimination of TB in India by 2025.

The results framework below highlights the core impact, outcome indicators and targets of the NSP that highlight the four thrust areas that include private sector engagement, plugging the leak from the TB care cascade, active TB case-finding among key populations (socially vulnerable and clinically high risk) and specific protection for prevention from development of active TB in high risk groups.

## **About Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY)**

- It is a scheme for nutritional support to Tuberculosis (TB) patients launched by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
  - Financial incentive of Rs.500/- per month is provided to each notified TB patient for duration for which the patient is on anti-TB treatment.
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## **World Meteorological Day**

- World Meteorological Day is celebrated every year on March 23, and with climate change continuing to spread chaos around the world, this day which showcases the work of meteorological and hydrological services gets special significance.
- World Meteorological Day takes place every year on 23 March and commemorates the coming into force on 23 March 1950 of the Convention establishing the World Meteorological Organization.
- It showcases the essential contribution of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services to the safety and wellbeing of society and is celebrated with activities around the world. The themes chosen for World Meteorological Day reflect topical weather, climate or water-related issues.
- The theme for World Meteorological Day 2019 is 'The Sun, the Earth and the Weather'. "The Sun delivers the energy that powers all life on Earth. It drives the weather, ocean currents and the hydrological cycle,"

### **Mandate**

As weather, climate and the water cycle know no national boundaries, international cooperation at a global scale is essential for the development of meteorology, climatology and operational hydrology as well as to reap the benefits from their application. WMO provides the framework for such international cooperation.

### **WMO programmes facilitate and promote:**

- the establishment of networks of observational stations to provide weather, climate and water-related data;
- the establishment and maintenance of data management centres and telecommunication systems for the provision and rapid exchange of weather, climate and water-related data;
- the creation of standards for observation and monitoring in order to ensure adequate uniformity in the practices and procedures employed worldwide and, thereby, ascertain the homogeneity of data and

statistics;

- the application of science and technology in operational meteorology and hydrology to aviation, transport (air, land and maritime), water resource management, agriculture and other focus areas;
  - activities in operational hydrology as well as closer cooperation between National Meteorological and Hydrological Services in states and territories where they are separate; and
  - the coordination of research and training in meteorology and related fields
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## **Jamaat-e-Islami pushed youth to militancy**

### **Why in news?**

The surge in local youth joining terrorist ranks spurred the ban on Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI-J&K), a socio-religious group that has been active in Jammu and Kashmir since 1942.

### **Local Youth into terrorism:**

- Most locals who joined terrorist groups were associated with the JeI, either through educational institutions run by it or religious activities
- In 2018, over 180 Kashmiri youths joined these groups, and around 56% were locals, the official said. The same year, 252 terrorists were killed in various operations and around 60% were locals.
- Earlier foreign terrorists killed were more in number but the trend has reversed in the past two years. More locals have joined the militant ranks and more are getting killed.

### **JeI Network:**

- An internal note from the Centre before the February 28 ban said the JeI has been using its network of schools to further promote anti-India feeling among children in the Valley.

- Its leaders have been encouraging cadres of the JeI youth wing-Jamiat-ul-Tulba to be recruited into terrorist outfits.
- It added that hardline leaders of the JeI continue to maintain regular contact with Pakistan High Commission for support.
- The State is presently under President's rule and the ban comes ahead of the general elections.

### **Widespread arrests:**

- In February, over 300 members of the JeI were rounded up by the J&K police. Some were picked even before the ban came into force.
- The detention and arrests came around the same time as the Indian Air Force (IAF) precision strikes at a Jaish-e-Mohammad terror camp in Pakistan's Balakot on February 26, post-Pulwama terror attack.
- The Centre has claimed that the JeI has been collecting funds in the name of religious activities and using the same for 'anti-national separatist activities.
- The JeI also has several trusts for running schools to disseminate orthodox Islamic ideology. Behind this façade, hardliners within the JeI have been involved with militant groups.
- The group was actively supporting militancy during 1988-99 under the influence of ISI. It patronised Hizbul Mujahideen and in the initial years was the backbone of HM.

### **Ban in the Past:**

- JeI has been banned twice in the past. The first ban continued for two years and the next ban was effective for three years.
- JeI was banned first in 1975 by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the former Prime Minister of J&K.
- It was banned again in 1990 when Mufti Mohammad Syed, the founder of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was Union Home Minister.

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### **India to seek U.S. virtual SIM details**



## **Why in news?**

A request will be sent to the U.S. for details from a service provider of “virtual SIMs,” which were used by the suicide bomber of the Jaish-e-Mohammad behind the Pulwama attack and his Pakistan and Kashmir handlers.

## **About this Technology:**

- Piecing together the probe from the site, searches carried out by the Jammu and Kashmir police and Central security agencies at an encounter site in Tral as well as other locations, it was found that the bomber, Adil Dar, was in constant touch with his JeM handler across the border using this technology.
- The main mastermind, Mudassir Khan, was killed in the Tral gunfight.
- Forty soldiers were killed on February 14 when Dar rammed his explosives-laden vehicle into a CRPF bus at Pulwama. India retaliated, bombing the Jaish hideout in Pakistan’s Balakot.
- It was a new method for terrorists across the border to use a “virtual SIM,” generated by a service provider in the U.S.
- Adil Dar was in constant touch with his Jaish-e-Mohammad handler across the border and the mastermind Mudassir Khan using the virtual SIM technology.

## **How it works?**

- Under the method, the computer generates a telephone number and the user downloads an application of the service provider on his smartphone.
- The number is linked to social networking sites. The verification code generated by these networking sites is received on the smartphone, and the user is ready.

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## **Real Estate Investment Trust**

## **What is it?**

- A Real Estate Investment Trust or REIT is an investment vehicle that provides an opportunity to invest in various projects by only investing in the units of a sponsor entity that will manage the paperwork and may be, even the hindrances of investing in the real estate market.
- Look at it like a mutual fund through which one can invest small amounts and own units representing shares of various large companies.
- REIT will offer an opportunity to own units of commercial real estate.
- The sponsor entity launches an REIT that owns the properties and then leases them to earn rental income, which is then distributed among the unit holders.

## **What are the benefits?**

- The biggest benefit is the ease of investment as investing in REIT is just like investing in direct equity that can be done through a demat account.
- The other big advantage is getting an opportunity to invest in commercial properties that will earn rental income.
- This is a significant advantage as commercial properties typically earn more rent than residential properties with built-in clauses of rent hikes at fixed intervals.
- Moreover, REIT regulations mandate the distribution of 90% of the rental income to unit holders. The remaining 10% can be used for business purposes.
- Also, since REIT is a publicly listed and traded instrument, liquidity should ideally not be a concern.
- Apart from the rental income, any increase in the value of units will also add to overall capital appreciation.

## **Are investors ready to accept REIT as an option?**

- If the response to the first-ever public issue of a REIT is anything to go by, then there surely is a demand for such a product.
- The initial public offering of Embassy Office Parks REIT, was subscribed nearly 2.6 times with bids received for 18.35 crore units as against 7.11 crore units on offer in the price band of Rs. 299 to Rs. 300.



## **What are the risks involved in investing in REIT?**

- Every investment has an element of risk and REIT is no exception.
- A downturn in the real estate sector would impact rental income and also, capital appreciation.
- Rentals would also be under pressure if the real estate inventory is huge due to lack of demand.
- Also, real estate has been a preferred personal investment avenue for Indian investors for many years so most people would already have an exposure to the sector and increasing the exposure through REIT might not serve any purpose.
- Also, REIT in India is at a nascent stage and as the segment evolves, the regulatory environment could be tightened.

## **How are REITs taxed?**

- It is mandatory for a REIT to distribute 90% of its rental income among its unit holders.
- This income will be added to the overall income of the investor and will be taxed at the applicable rates.
- REIT also involves a tax deducted at source component that is 10% for resident investors and 40% for non-resident investors.
- Further, if a unit holder sells his/her REIT units on the stock exchange platform then capital gains tax would also be applicable based on the period of holding.
- The post-tax returns and capital appreciation will be the big factors in ascertaining whether REITs are here to stay.

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## **Army's carbine procurement**

### **Why in news?**

The fast-track procurement of 93,895 Close Quarter Carbine (CQB) rifles for the Army has been delayed even after the completion of cost negotiations as the case is pending with the Defence Ministry, according to defence sources.

## Current Status:

- Cost negotiations have been completed, and the file has gone to a three-member oversight committee where it has been held up without a decision.
- The status of the case was on the agenda of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) meeting held last week.
- In January 2018, the DAC approved the purchase of 72,400 assault rifles and 93,895 carbines for Rs. 3,547 crore through the **fast-track procurement (FTP) mode**.
- After evaluation, Sig Sauer of the U.S. emerged as the lowest bidder for the assault rifles and the United Arab Emirates-based **Caracal for the carbines**.
- Last month, the Defence Ministry signed an agreement with **Sig Sauer for SIG 716 assault** rifles meant for front-line infantry soldiers deployed in operational areas.
- The **carbine should have an effective range of 200 m and weigh less than 2 kg**.
- Under the FTP process, there is no elaborate general staff evaluation, and the exercise is expected to be completed in a year.
- The evaluation is based on the operational requirements, and deliveries should be completed in a year of the contract having been signed. The deal is estimated to cost Rs. 1,800 crore.

## Help up by the committee:

- The oversight committee consists of members of the Army, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Defence Ministry.
  - It had received questions on the company's capability to deliver the entire volume in time. The case has been held up by objections from the DRDO official on the committee.
  - The committee was supposed to give its comments in three days, but it had taken longer, and had not given any reason for the delay, another defence source said.
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## Rushikulya waits for Olive Ridleys

### Why in news?

Even after waiting for almost a month, Olive Ridley turtles have not yet arrived for mass nesting at Odisha's **Rushikulya rookery and Devi river mouth**. The reasons are not fully understood yet.

### Mass Nesting:

- Mass nesting called as Aribadda, has already occurred at the Gahirmatha coast of the State.
- Wildlife Institute of India's (WII) scientists said it could not be said for sure whether mass nesting would occur or not at the Rushikulya rookery this year.
- According to them, who has studied mass nesting along the Odisha coast over the past decades, mass nesting of Olive Ridleys can **occur up to any time till the end of April**.
- Till now, lakhs of impregnated female Olive Ridleys are continuing to congregate in the sea near the Rushikulya rookery, but they aren't approaching the beach for mass nesting.
- Sporadic nesting is continuing at this coast since February. Till now, over 1,000 mother turtles have nested at the Rushikulya rookery.

### Deciding Factors:

- Although it is held that **climatic parameters as well as beach conditions** decide mass nesting at a coast, but still not sure how these parameters affect their decision-making.

### Protection:

- The Forest Department has readied six artificial hatcheries to incubate eggs resulting from sporadic nesting.
- The beach has been cleaned up. A metal net fences a stretch of over five kilometres from Gokharkuda to Prayagi this fencing is expected

to protect Olive Ridleys and their eggs from predators and human intervention.

- CCTV cameras continue to keep a watch on the nesting beach.
- This year, the Forest Department also prepared a three-km-long coast near the **Bahuda river mouth**, from Sunapur to Anantpur, as an alternative mass nesting site, about 20 km to the south of Rushikulya.
- However, except for few occurrences of sporadic nesting, mass nesting has yet not occurred at this new beach.

## **Protect ocean ecosystem**

### **Why in news?**

Vice President of India M.Venkaiah Naidu cautioned against the further degradation of oceans and their ecosystem. He was visiting Goa.

### **Blue economy Potential:**

- India should fully tap the enormous potential of the blue economy to achieve higher growth and initiate appropriate programmes for sustainable harnessing of ocean reserves.
- He also said that there is a need to develop technologies that enable deep sea mining, underwater vehicles and robotics, and the extraction of minerals from the sea.
- NIO should also undertake research and development of drugs from the sea.
- Focus in some of the ocean research areas such as minerals from the ocean, and energy from the ocean, can make India a global leader.

### **Precautionary measures:**

- However, every effort must be made by all the stakeholders to prevent further degradation of the ocean and its ecosystem.
- Precautionary measures were necessary because of global warming, marine pollution and resource degradation.

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## **Rising sea levels to affect water table along Chennai's shoreline:**

### **Why in news?**

The fragile water table in the city's coastal areas, particularly along East Coast Road, is under threat of severe seawater intrusion due to anticipated rise in sea levels in the next few decades, according to a study by the Department of Geology, Anna University.

### **Rise in Sea level:**

- There is a rise in sea level by **2mm every year** based on a report by **the Indian Network for Climate Change Assessment** under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- The increasing sea level would also force the water table along the coastline to move upwards. But it would slowly replace the freshwater at the bottom of the aquifer.
- The study, published in the Journal of Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, has forecast the impact of sea level rise on the coastal aquifer in the coming years, till 2100.
- Given the rate of increase in sea level, the water table would witness an incursion of sea water to the extent of 2-3mm every year.
- The volume of fresh water would gradually reduce in the coastal areas due to climate change-induced sea level rise.
- Rapid urbanisation and indiscriminate drawal have already led to salt water intrusion in areas from **the Adyar river to Palavakkam**.
- Residents are heavily dependent on other resources, including private water tankers.

### **Submerging of land:**

- The sea would also be moving closer to the land by 0.5 m every year because of the increase in sea level. We would lose 1.5 sq. km of land

along the coastline by 2100, particularly in Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad, as the beach there is flat.

- The water table along ECR is fragile as it is surrounded by the sea, the **Adyar river, the Buckingham canal and the backwaters of Muttukadu.**
  - It is imperative to **change the land-use pattern** along the shoreline to tackle the impact of climate change.
  - Areas closer to the coast must also adopt water conservation measures to sustain groundwater, notes the study.
  - Only minimal groundwater extraction through open wells must be allowed and water pumped in localities along the shoreline must be replenished through rainwater harvesting.
  - Large residential complexes must adopt other measures like permeable pavements.
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