# Tribal Health in India

**For Prelims:** Tribal communities, Article 342, Tribal Health

**For Mains:** Healthcare challenges faced by tribal communities, Impact of infrastructure and workforce constraints on healthcare access

## Why in News?

Recently, the healthcare challenges faced by **tribal communities in India** have come into focus. Despite India's remarkable achievements, such as emerging as the **world's 5<sup>th</sup>-largest economy** and its contribution to the **global vaccination drive,** tribal communities continue to experience significant healthcare disparities.

- As India celebrates its accomplishments at **India@75**, it is crucial to address the urgent need for equitable **healthcare access for tribal communities.**

## What is the Status of Tribal Communities in India?

- **Demographic Status:**
    - Tribal communities in India constitute a significant portion of the country's population, accounting for **approximately 8.9%.**
        - Out of the total Schedule Tribe population, approximately 2.6 million (2.5%) belong to **"Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups" (PVTGs)** known as the **"Primitive Tribes"** - the most disadvantaged of all the Schedule Tribe communities.
    - They are spread across various states, with higher concentrations in states like **Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan**, the NER states and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- **Cultural Status:**
    - Tribal communities in India have their own rich and diverse culture, language, and traditions.
    - They have a **symbiotic relationship with nature** and depend on forests and hills for their livelihood.
        - They have their own beliefs, practices, and preferences regarding health, education, religion, and governance.
- **Related Constitutional and Statutory Provisions:**
    - Certain tribal communities in India are recognized as **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** under **Article 342 of the** Constitution of India.
        - They are entitled to special provisions and safeguards for their social, economic, educational, and political development.
    - Their interests are safeguarded by various laws and policies such as the **5<sup>th</sup> and 6gh Scheduled areas,** Forest Rights Act 2006, and the **PESA Act 1996**.
    - They also have representation in the **Parliament** and **State Legislatures through reserved seats.**
        - Draupadi Murmu **is India's first tribal** President.
- **Developmental Status:**

- Tribal communities in India face multiple challenges and disadvantages in terms of **poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, health, employment, infrastructure, and human rights.**
    - They lag behind the **national average on various indicators** of human development such as income, education, health, sanitation, and gender equality.
    - They also face **discrimination, exploitation, displacement, and violence from non-tribal people and institutions.** They have limited access to resources and opportunities for their empowerment and participation.

## What are the Main Tribal Health Issues?

- **Malnutrition:**
    - Tribal people don't get enough food or the right kind of food to stay healthy. They suffer from **hunger, stunting, wasting, anemia, and lack of vitamins** and minerals.
- **Communicable Diseases:**
    - Tribal people are more likely to catch infectious diseases such as [malaria](), [tuberculosis](), [leprosy](), [HIV/AIDS](), [diarrhoea](), **respiratory infections, and diseases spread by insects or animals due to several factors like** poor sanitation and hygiene, and limited access to healthcare.
- **Non-Communicable Diseases:**
    - Tribal people are also at risk of getting chronic diseases such as **diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and mental disorders.**
        - According to a study, about 13% of tribal adults have diabetes and 25% have high blood pressure.
- **Addictions:**
    - The above-mentioned diseases can be caused by factors such as tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and substance abuse.
    - More than 72% tribal men 15–54 years of age use tobacco and more than 50% consume alcohol against 56% and 30% non-tribal men, respectively.

## What are the Challenges in Tribal Health?

- **Lack of Infrastructure:**
    - Inadequate **healthcare facilities and infrastructure** in tribal areas.
    - Insufficient access to **clean water and sanitation facilities.**
- **Shortage of Medical Professionals:**
    - **Limited presence of doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals** in tribal regions.
    - Difficulty in **attracting and retaining skilled healthcare personnel** in remote areas.
    - Imbalance in the distribution of healthcare professionals, with a **concentration in urban areas.**
- **Connectivity and Geographic Barriers:**
    - **Remote locations** and difficult terrain hinder access to healthcare services.
    - Lack of proper roads, **transportation facilities, and communication networks.**
    - Challenges in reaching tribal communities during emergencies and providing timely medical assistance.
- **Affordability and Financial Constraints:**
    - Limited financial resources and **low-income levels among tribal communities.**
    - Inability to afford healthcare expenses, including medical treatments, medicines, and diagnostics.
    - **Lack of awareness** about available **healthcare schemes and insurance options.**
- **Cultural Sensitivities and Language Barriers:**
    - Unique **cultural practices and beliefs that impact healthcare-seeking behavior**.
    - **Language barriers** between healthcare providers and tribal communities, leading to miscommunication and inadequate care.
    - Lack of culturally sensitive healthcare services that respect tribal customs and traditions.
- **Limited Access to Essential Services:**
    - Insufficient availability of essential healthcare services, such as **maternal and child health, immunization, and preventive care.**
    - Inadequate access to specialized care, diagnostic facilities, and emergency medical

services.
- Limited awareness about health issues, preventive measures, and healthcare rights among tribal communities.
- **Inadequate Funding and Resource Allocation:**
  - **Limited allocation of funds for healthcare in tribal areas.**
  - Insufficient investment in healthcare infrastructure, equipment, and technology.
  - Lack of dedicated funding for addressing tribal health challenges and implementing targeted interventions.

## What is the GoI's Report on Tribal Health in India?

- **In 2018,** an expert committee, constituted jointly by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Tribal Affairs released the **first comprehensive report on Tribal Health in India.**
- **Recommendations of the Report:**
  - Implement **Universal Health Assurance under the National Health Policy (2017)** in tribal areas.
  - Utilize **Aarogya Mitra,** trained **local tribal youth, and** ASHA workers for primary care in tribal communities with support from the gramsabha.
  - Provide financial protection through **government medical insurance schemes** for secondary and tertiary care.
  - Introduce **ST Health Cards for tribal people** living outside scheduled areas to facilitate access to benefits at any healthcare institution.
  - Implement a **Tribal Malaria Action Plan in tribal-dominated districts** under the National Health Mission.
  - Strengthen **Home-Based Newborn and Child Care (HBNCC) programs** to reduce infant and child mortality.
  - Enhance food security and strengthen Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) **to address malnutrition.**
  - Publish a state of tribal health report every three years and establish a Tribal Health Index (THI) to monitor tribal health.
  - Establish a **National Tribal Health Council as an apex body,** along with Tribal Health Directorate and Tribal Health Research Cell, at both central and state levels.

## Way Forward

- Addressing the **disparity in health-seeking behavior** and **health-care delivery among tribal populations.**
- Recognizing and acknowledging the services provided by **traditional healers** in tribal communities.
- Empowering tribal communities through **health literacy programs** to enable them to make informed decisions about their health.
- Implementing **targeted recruitment and retention strategies** to attract healthcare professionals to tribal regions. And Investing in the **development of road networks, transportation facilities, and communication** networks to enhance connectivity.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### *Prelims*

**Q1. Every year, a month long ecologically important campaign/festival is held during which certain communities/tribes plant saplings of fruit-bearing trees. Which of the following are such communities/ tribes? (2014)**

**(a)** Bhutia and Lepcha
**(b)** Gond and Korku

**(c)** Irula and Toda
**(d)** Sahariya and Agariya

**Ans: (b)**

**Q2. The provisions in Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India are made in order to (2015)**

**(a)** protect the interests of Scheduled Tribes
**(b)** determine the boundaries between States
**(c)** determine the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats
**(d)** protect the interests of all the border States

**Ans: (a)**

**Q3. Under which Schedule of the Constitution of India can the transfer of tribal land to private parties for mining be declared null and void? (2019)**

**(a)** Third Schedule
**(b)** Fifth Schedule
**(c)** Ninth Schedule
**(d)** Twelfth Schedule

**Ans: (b)**

**Q4. If a particular area is brought under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which one of the following statements best reflects the consequence of it? (2022)**

**(a)** This would prevent the transfer of land of tribal people to non-tribal people.
**(b)** This would create a local self-governing body in that area.
**(c)** This would convert that area into a Union Territory.
**(d)** The State having such areas would be declared a Special Category State.

**Ans: (a)**

## _Mains_

**Q.** What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)? **(2017)**

**Source: IE**

# PBR and Biodiversity Management in India

**For Prelims:** People's Biodiversity Register (PBR)**,** Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC)**,** Biological Diversity Act 2002**,** Lifestyle for the Environment **,** Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**,** Nagoya Protocol .

**For Mains:** Status of Biodiversity Management in India.

## Why in News

The **National Campaign for Updation and Verification of** People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) was launched in **Goa**, marking a significant milestone in the **documentation and preservation of** India's rich biological diversity. It was organised by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

- Till now, **2,67,608 PBRs** have been prepared in the country.

## What is the People's Biodiversity Register?

- **About:**
  - The **People's Biodiversity Register** serves as a **comprehensive record of various aspects of biodiversity,** including **conservation of habitats, preservation of land races, folk varieties, and cultivars,** domesticated stocks and breeds of animals, and micro-organisms.
  - **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC)** are created as per the **Biological Diversity Act 2002** for promoting conservation, sustainable use, and documentation of biological diversity.
    - Local bodies in the states and union territories constitute **BMCs, which are entrusted with the preparation of People's Biodiversity Registers** in consultation with local communities.
- **Importance:**
  - It helps in conserving biodiversity, which is key to maintaining balance in nature. It also enables local communities to share the benefits derived from **genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.**
  - It supports the **implementation of the provisions of the Biological Diversity Act 2002**, which aims to **regulate access to biological resources** and ensure fair and equitable benefit sharing.
  - Being a **bottom-up exercise**, it is also a means of understanding the **overlap of cultural and natural biodiversity.**
    - It envisages a **decentralised way through an inclusive approach.**
  - It aligns with the concept of **"Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE)"**, introduced by the Indian Prime Minister at COP26 **in Glasgow.**
    - This concept calls upon **individuals and institutions globally to promote mindful and deliberate utilisation of resources** to protect and preserve the environment.

## What is the Status of Biodiversity Management in India?

- **About:**
  - With only **2.4% of the earth's land area**, India accounts for **7-8% of the world's recorded species.**
  - **4 of the world's 36** biodiversity hotspots **are located in India:** The **Himalayas, Western Ghats, Indo-Burma area, and Sundaland.**
    - Two of these, the **Indo-Burma area and Sundaland, are distributed throughout South Asia** and are not precisely contained within India's formal borders.
- **Biodiversity Governance in India:**
  - **India's Biological Diversity Act (BDA) 2002**, is in close synergy with the **Nagoya Protocol** and aims to implement provisions of the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).**
    - The **Nagoya Protocol sought to ensure commercial and research utilisation of genetic resources** led to sharing its benefits with the government and the community that conserved such resources.
  - The BDA was **hailed as an important step towards preserving India's vast**

**biodiversity,** as it recognised the **sovereign right of countries over its natural resources.**

- It seeks to address issues of managing **bio-resources in the most decentralised manner possible.**
  - It also envisages three layered structures:
    - **The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) at the national level.**
    - **The State Biodiversity Boards (SSBs) at the state level**
    - **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the local level.**
  - The act also **strengthens the country's stand with respect to anyone claiming an intellectual property right over biodiversity-related knowledge.**
- **Challenges related to Biodiversity Conservation:**
  - **Introduction of Invasive Species:** Invasive alien species include **plants, animals and pathogens** that are non-native to an ecosystem cause environmental harm or **adversely affect ecological balance.**
    - According to CBD reports, invasive alien species have contributed to nearly **40% of all animal extinction.**
  - **Global Warming and Climate Change:** It poses threats to plant and animal species as many organisms are **sensitive to carbon dioxide concentration** in the atmosphere that may lead to their disappearance.
    - Use of **pesticide, rise of tropospheric ozone, sulphur and nitrogen oxides from industries** also contribute to the degradation of natural ecosystems.
  - **Choking Marine Biodiversity:** Due to **lack of efficient plastic waste management, microplastics** are getting dumped into oceans choking and starving marine life and causing liver, reproductive, and gastrointestinal damage in animals and directly impacting marine biodiversity.
  - **Genetic Modification Concern:** Genetically modified plants impose high **risks to the disruption of ecosystem and biodiversity** because the better traits produced from engineering genes can result in the favouring of one organism.
    - Hence, it can **eventually disrupt the natural process of gene flow and affect the sustainability of indigenous variety.**

## What is the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)?

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was negotiated and signed by nations at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro **in Brazil on June 5, 1992.**
  - The convention came into force on **December 29, 1993. India became a party to the convention on February 18, 1994.** At the present, there are **196 Parties to this Convention.**
- CBD is a legally binding treaty and has 3 main objectives:
  - Conservation of biodiversity.
  - Sustainable use of the components of biodiversity.
  - Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.
- The **Secretariat of the CBD is based in Montreal, Canada.**

## Way Forward

- **Community-led Conservation:** There is a need to **engage local communities, including indigenous peoples, in the conservation efforts.** Encourage their active participation by involving them in decision-making processes, establishing community-managed conservation areas, and recognizing their traditional knowledge and practices related to biodiversity conservation.
- **Technology and Data-driven Conservation:** There is a need to utilise emerging technologies such as **remote sensing, drones, and artificial intelligence to monitor and track biodiversity changes, identify high-priority conservation areas,** and assess the effectiveness of conservation interventions.
- **Protecting Entire Biosphere: Conservation should not be limited to the species level but**

should be about the conservation of the entire ecosystem, including the local communities.
  ○ **India needs more** biosphere reserves to protect biodiversity and ensure sustainability of the ecosystem.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### *Prelims*

**Q1. Two important rivers – one with its source in Jharkhand (and known by a different name in Odisha), and another, with its source in Odisha – merge at a place only a short distance from the coast of Bay of Bengal before flowing into the sea. This is an important site of wildlife and biodiversity and a protected area. Which one of the following could be this? (2011)**

**(a)** Bhitarkanika
**(b)** Chandipur-on-sea
**(c)** Gopalpur-on-sea
**(d)** Simlipal

**Ans: (a)**

**Q2. With reference to India's biodiversity, Ceylon frogmouth, Coppersmith barbet, Gray-chinned minivet and White-throated redstart are (2020)**

**(a)** Birds
**(b)** Primates
**(c)** Reptiles
**(d)** Amphibians

**Ans: (a)**

### *Mains*

**Q.** How does biodiversity vary in India? How is the Biological Diversity Act,2002 helpful in the conservation of flora and fauna? **(2018)**

**Source: PIB**

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# Sengol to be Installed in New Parliament Building

**For Prelims:** Central Vista redevelopment project, **Parliament**, Sengol, **Chola Empire**, **Governor-General of India**, **Union Budget 2022-23.**

**For Mains:** Historical Significance of Sengol.

## Why in News?

On **May 28<sup>th</sup> 2023**, the Prime Minister will inaugurate the **new** [Parliament] **building,** which is part of the **Central Vista redevelopment project.**

- One of the highlights of the event will be the installation of a **historic golden sceptre, called Sengol, near the** [Speaker's] **seat.**
- The Sengol is a **symbol of India's independence and sovereignty**, as well as its [cultural heritage] **and diversity.**

## What is the Historical Significance of Sengol?

- The **Sengol** is profound in meaning, derived from the Tamil word **"Semmai",** it means **"Righteousness".** It was made of **gold or silver** and was often decorated with precious stones.
    - A Sengol sceptre was carried by **emperors on ceremonial occasions, and used to represent their authority.**
- It is **associated with the** [Chola Empire], one of the longest-ruling and **most influential dynasties in South India.**
    - The Cholas ruled over parts of **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, and Sri Lanka** from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century CE.
    - They were known for their **military prowess, maritime trade, administrative efficiency, cultural patronage, and temple architecture.**
- The Cholas had a tradition of **handing over the Sengol sceptre from one king to another as a mark of succession and legitimacy.**
    - The ceremony was usually performed by a **high priest or a guru who blessed the new king and conferred him with the Sengol.**

## How did Sengol Become a Part of India's Independence?

- **Before** [independence] **from the British rule in 1947,** the then Viceroy - Lord Mountbatten posed a question to the to-be Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru: **"What is the ceremony that should be followed to symbolise the transfer of power from British to Indian hands?"**
    - PM Nehru then consulted **C. Rajagopalachari,** commonly known as Rajaji, who went on to **become the last** [Governor-General of India.]
        - Rajaji suggested that the **Chola model of handing over the Sengol sceptre could be adopted as a suitable ceremony for India's independence.**
        - He said that it would reflect **India's ancient civilisation and culture,** as well as its **unity in diversity.**
    - The Sengol sceptre was presented to **PM Nehru by Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam (a 500-year-old Saivaite monastery) on August 14, 1947.**
- A golden sceptre was crafted by **Vummidi Bangaru Chetty,** a famous jeweller in Madras (now Chennai).
    - The **Nandi,** with its unyielding gaze as the beholder of **"Nyaya", is hand-carved at the top.**

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## Where is Sengol Now and Why is it Being Installed in the New Parliament Building?

- After receiving the **Sengol sceptre in 1947**, Nehru kept it at his residence in Delhi for some time.
  - He then decided to donate it to **Anand Bhavan Museum in Allahabad (now Prayagraj),** his ancestral home.
    - The museum was established by his **father Motilal Nehru in 1930** to preserve the history and legacy of India's freedom movement.
  - The Sengol sceptre **remained at Anand Bhavan Museum for over seven decades.**
- In **2021-22,** when the **Central Vista redevelopment project was underway,** the government decided to **revive this historical event and install the Sengol sceptre in the new Parliament building.**
  - It will be placed near the Speaker's seat in the new Parliament building and will be accompanied by a **plaque that will explain its history and meaning.**
- The installation of Sengol in the new Parliament building is not just a **symbolic gesture but also a meaningful message.**
  - It signifies that **India's democracy is rooted in its ancient traditions and values** and that it is **inclusive and respectful of its diversity and plurality.**

## What is the Central Vista Redevelopment Project?

- The **Central Vista Redevelopment Project** is a project that aims to revamp the Central Vista, India's central administrative area located near Raisina Hill, New Delhi.
  - The area was originally designed by **Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker** during British colonial rule and was retained by Government of India after independence.
- In **Union Budget 2022-23**, the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** was allocated an amount of **Rs 2,600 crore for the construction of non-residential office buildings of the ambitious Central Vista project, including the Parliament as well as the Supreme Court of India.**

**Source: PIB**

# Census

**For Prelims:** Census, Covid-19, Census of India Act of 1948, Demarcation of Constituencies, **Migration, PDS.**

**For Mains:** Census, its significance and implication of its Delay in framing Policy.

## Why in News?

The 2021 **Census** in India had to be postponed for the first time in the past 150 years due to the **Covid-19 pandemic**. Despite the pandemic ending and the return to normalcy, the Census is still pending.

- It was initially proposed to be **an entirely digital exercise**, with all the information being fed into a mobile app by the enumerators. However, owing to **'practical difficulties', it was later decided to conduct it in 'mix mode',** using either the mobile app or the traditional paper forms.

**Note:** According to the State of **World Population report 2023** released recently by the **UN Population Fund (UNFPA)**, India will overtake China to become the world's most populous country by the middle of 2023.

## What is the Census?

- **Definition:**
    - **Population Census** is the total process of collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, **at a specific time, of all persons in a country or a well-defined** part of a country.
    - Census is the basis for **reviewing the country's progress in the past decade,** monitoring the ongoing schemes of the government and plan for the future.
    - It provides an instantaneous photographic picture of a community, which is valid at a particular moment of time.
- **Phases:** The Census Operations in India are carried out in two phases:
    - **Houselisting/Housing Census** under which details of all buildings, permanent or temporary, are noted with their type, amenities, and assets.
    - **Population Enumeration** where more detailed information on each individual residing in the country, Indian national or otherwise is noted.
        - It is carried out after making a list of all households that are surveyed.
- **Frequency:**
    - The first synchronous census was taken in 1881, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India. Since then, **censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.**
    - The **Census of India Act of 1948** provides the legal framework for carrying out the Census however, **it does not mention its timing or periodicity.**
        - Hence, a Census is **Constitutionally mandated in India but there is no Constitutional or legal requirement** that it needs to be conducted decennially.
    - The 10-year frequency is followed in many countries (Ex. the US and the UK) but some countries like **Australia, Canada, Japan conduct it every five years.**
- **Nodal Ministry:**
    - The decennial Census is conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner**, Ministry of Home Affairs.
        - Until 1951, the Census Organisation was set up on an **ad-hoc basis for each Census.**

## What is the Significance of Census?

- **Primary and Authentic Data:**
  - It generates primary and authentic data that **forms the foundation of various statistical analyses.** This data is essential for planning, decision-making, and development initiatives in various sectors, such as administration, economy, and social welfare.
  - It is **not the legal requirement but the utility of the Census** that has made it a permanent regular exercise. **Reliable and up-to-date data is vital** as it influences the accuracy of indicators used in different aspects of India's progress.
- **Demarcation:**
  - Census data is utilized for **demarcation of constituencies** and allocation of representation in government bodies.
  - It plays a crucial role in determining the number of **seats to be reserved for** Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Parliament, State legislatures, local bodies, and government services.
    - In the case of panchayats and municipal bodies, the reservation of seats for SCs and STs is based on their proportion in the population.
    - This ensures proportional representation and promotes inclusivity in the political and administrative systems.
- **Better Access for Businesses:**
  - The census data is also important for **business houses and industries** for strengthening and planning their business for penetration into areas, which had hitherto remained, uncovered.
- **Giving Grants:**
  - The **Finance Commission** provide grants to the states on the basis of population figures available from the Census data.

## What can be the Consequences of Delaying Census?

- **Challenges in Framing Policy:**
  - A break in the Census periodicity can result in data that is not comparable to previous sets, creating **challenges in analyzing trends and making informed policy** decisions.
  - Lack of reliable data – 12-year-old data on a constantly changing metric is not reliable – has the **potential to upset every indicator on India** and affect the efficacy and efficiency of all kinds of developmental initiatives.
- **Political Misrepresentation:**
  - Delaying the Census has consequences for the reservation of seats for SCs and STs in various governing bodies.
    - The data from the 2011 Census **would continue to be used**, which may result in inaccurate seat reservations.
  - This is particularly problematic in **towns and panchayats where there have been significant changes** in population composition over the last decade.
- **Unreliable Estimates on Welfare Measures:**
  - The delay will impact government schemes and programmes, and would result in **unreliable estimates from other surveys** on consumption, health and employment, which depend on census data to determine policy and welfare measures.
    - As many as 100 million people are likely to be excluded from the government's food subsidy programme—the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**—as the population figures used to calculate the number of beneficiaries are from the 2011 census.
- **Impact on Houselisting:**
  - Houselisting takes nearly a year to complete, **as it requires enumerators to locate addresses and gather relevant information.** In India, houselisting is particularly crucial because the country lacks a robust address system.
  - Delaying the census means that the **list becomes outdated, as changes in households, addresses, and demographics occur** over time.
    - This can result in **incomplete or incorrect information, leading to a less reliable foundation** for subsequent population enumeration and data collection

- **Lack of Migration Data:**
  - The outdated 2011 Census data couldn't provide answers to important questions regarding the numbers, causes, and patterns of migration.
    - During the Covid lockdown, the sight of migrant workers leaving cities and walking back to **their villages highlighted their challenges.**
  - The government lacked information on **the stranded migrants and their requirements for food relief and transportation** support.
    - The upcoming Census is expected to capture the scale of migration towards smaller towns in addition to major cities, shedding light on healthcare and social service needs specific to migrants.
    - This data can help in identifying the necessary support and services required by migrants and their locations.

## Way Forward

- The government should prioritize conducting the Census at the **earliest possible time.**
- Efforts should be made to **leverage technology and innovative methods to streamline the data collection** process.
- The government should allocate necessary resources and manpower to ensure a smooth and **efficient Census operation.**
- Timely completion of the Census is crucial for **accurate data, informed policy decisions, effective governance,** and inclusive development in various sectors.

**Source: IE**

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# Health for All: WHO

## Why in News?

Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in its 76<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly (WHA) has released a report titled- **"Health for All: Transforming economies to deliver what matters"**, recommending a roadmap to link health with sustainable growth.

- The **76<sup>th</sup> WHA** was held in Geneva, Switzerland and the theme was - **"WHO at 75: Saving Lives, Driving Health for All".**
- The report was launched by the **WHO Council on the Economics of Health (WCEH) for All**, which was formed in November 2020 in response to the **Covid-19 Pandemic.**

**Note: WCEH for All** was established to provide new economic thinking — reassessing how health and well-being are valued, produced and distributed across the economy.

## What are the Highlights of the Report?

- **Covid-19 a Global Failure:**
  - The Covid-19 pandemic was a preventable disaster resulting from a global failure to prioritize the well-being of humanity. Despite clear warnings, the importance of proactive measures to safeguard against pandemics was neglected **causing significant crises worldwide.**
    - In 2020 alone almost 100 million were pushed into poverty.
    - Even the scientifically remarkable achievement of rapidly developing an effective vaccine against Covid-19 failed to prioritize the common good.
  - Covid-19 exposed deep-seated inequities, emphasizing the need to **reshape the economy for Health for All.**
- **Shortage of Health Workers:**
  - There remains a huge shortage of health workers globally and especially in **low-income countries.**
    - Health workers, 70% of whom are women, unduly suffered on the frontline in the treatment of Covid-19 for **lack of decent protective equipment and support.**
  - While Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean are the regions most in need, many countries **struggle with constraints on their ability to invest in staff.**
- **Climate Change:**
  - Given the disastrous consequences **Climate Change** is already having on health.
    - The **Paris Agreement,** aimed at combating climate change, is considered a crucial public health agreement. However, the **goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C by 2050** may be surpassed within this decade.
  - Worldwide, air pollution from burning fossil fuels is responsible for a global total of 10.2million premature deaths, roughly the population of Bangkok or Hyderabad.
    - Climate change may cause **83 million excess deaths by the end of the century** due to rising temperatures caused by **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.**
- **Health Expenditure:**
  - Short-term austerity measures threaten health expenditure, undermining long-term benefits and **stability in healthcare provision.**
  - Insufficient long-term investments lead to **increased reliance on aid and** Out-of-Pocket Payments, hindering **Universal Health Coverage.**
- **Health as a Human Right:**
  - At least **140 countries recognize health as a human right** somewhere in their constitution but only four countries mention how to finance it.
    - 52 of these countries do **little in practicing health as a human right.**

# What are the Recommendations?

- **Valuing Health for All:**
  - **Valuing the Essential:** Treat health and wellbeing, health workers and health systems as a **long-term investment,** not a short-term cost.
  - **Human Rights:** Use legal and financial commitments to **enforce health as a human right.**
  - **Planetary Health:** Restore and protect the environment by upholding international commitments to a regenerative economy which links the planet and people.
  - **Dashboard for Healthy Economy:** Use a range of metrics that track progress across core societal values, above and beyond the narrow, static measure of GDP.
- **Financing Health for All:**
  - **Long term Finance:** Adopt a comprehensive, stable approach to funding Health for All.
  - **Quality of Finance:** Redraw the international architecture of finance to fund health equitably and proactively, including an effective and inclusive crisis response.
  - **Funding and Governance:** Ensure WHO is properly funded and governed to play its key global coordinating role in Health for All.
- **Innovating for Health for All:**
  - **Collective Intelligence:** Build symbiotic public-private alliances to maximize public value, sharing both risk and rewards.
  - **Common Good:** Design knowledge governance, including intellectual property regimes, for the common good to ensure global equitable access to vital health innovations.
  - **Outcomes Orientation:** Align innovation and industrial strategies with bold cross-sectoral missions to deliver Health for All
- **Strengthening Public Capacity for Health for All:**
  - **Whole-Of-Government:** Recognize that Health for All is not just for health ministries but for all government agencies.
  - **State Capacity:** Invest in the dynamic capabilities of the public sector, institutionalizing experimentation and learning, to lead effectively in delivering Health for All.
  - **Build Trust:** Demonstrate transparency and meaningful public engagement to hold governments accountable for the common good.

# What is the World Health Assembly (WHA)?

- **About:**
  - **The World Health Assembly (WHA)** is WHO's decision-making body attended by delegations from all of **WHO's member states.**
  - It is held yearly at the HQ of WHO, i.e., **Geneva, Switzerland.**
  - A specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board remains the focus of this assembly.
  - Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, 2022's assembly is the first in-person assembly.
- **Functions of WHA:**
  - Deciding on Organization's policies.
  - Appointment of the Director-General of WHO.
  - Administration of financial policies.
  - Review and approval of the proposed programme budget.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### _Mains_

**Q.** Appropriate local community-level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieve 'Health for All' in India. Explain. **(2018)**

# London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)

**For Prelims:** London Interbank Offered Rate, Mumbai Interbank Forward Outright Rate (MIFOR), **RBI**, **Interest Rate, Repo Rate**, ARR, SOFR, **Derivatives.**

**For Mains:** Significance of Transition from London Interbank Offered Rate to alternate Reference Rate.

## Why in News?

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has advised banks and other Regulated Entities to move away from the **London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)** and transition to Alternative Reference Rates (ARR).

- The transition away from LIBOR is aimed at reducing reliance on a benchmark that is susceptible to manipulation and ensuring the financial system's stability and integrity.

## What is LIBOR?

- **About:**
    - LIBOR is a **widely used global benchmark interest rate.** It represents the **average interest rate at which banks estimate they can borrow from each other** in the London interbank market for specific time periods.
    - LIBOR is important because it is used **as a reference rate for settling trades in various financial instruments** such as futures, options, swaps, and other **Derivatives.**
- **Calculation:**
    - To calculate LIBOR, a group of banks submits their **estimated borrowing** rates to Thomson Reuters, a news and financial data company, every business day.
    - The extreme rates are removed, and the **remaining rates are averaged to determine the LIBOR rate**, which aims to represent the median borrowing rate.
        - Previously, LIBOR was calculated for five major currencies and seven different time periods, resulting in 35 rates published each day.
        - However, the UK Financial Conduct Authority phased out most of these rates, and after 31st December, 2021, only **U.S. dollar LIBOR rates were allowed** to be published.
- **Significance:**
    - Many lenders, borrowers, investors, and financial institutions rely on **LIBOR to determine interest rates and pricing for these transactions.**
    - Not only is LIBOR used in financial markets, but **it also serves as a benchmark rate for consumer lending products** like mortgages, credit cards, and student loans.
    - It helps determine the interest rates that individuals and businesses pay on these loans.

## Why is RBI Moving Away from LIBOR?

- **Concerns Over Reliability and Integrity:**
    - The RBI is moving away from LIBOR due to concerns over its **reliability and integrity.**
    - The central flaw in the LIBOR mechanism is its **heavy reliance on banks to provide**

**honest and accurate reporting** of their borrowing rates, without considering their commercial interests. This creates an opportunity for manipulation and misconduct.

- During the 2008 financial crisis, some banks **artificially lowered their LIBOR submissions** to project a more favorable image amid the crisis. Panelists were reporting significantly lower borrowing costs compared to other market measures.

- **Issue of Integrity and Fairness:**
  - There is a tendency for banks to alter their **LIBOR submissions based on their trading units' derivative positions,** aiming to generate higher profits.
  - This raises concerns about the **integrity and fairness** of the benchmark.

## What is the Alternative to LIBOR?

- In 2017, the U.S. The Federal Reserve introduced the **Secured Overnight Financing Rate** (SOFR) as an alternative to LIBOR.
  - In India, new transactions were recommended to use SOFR along with the **Modified Mumbai Interbank Forward Outright Rate (MMIFOR)**, replacing Mumbai Interbank Forward Outright Rate (MIFOR).
- SOFR, is based on observable repo rates. These rates **reflect the cost of borrowing cash overnight and are collateralized by U.S.** Treasury securities.
- Unlike LIBOR, which relied on expert judgment, **SOFR is derived from actual transactions, making it less susceptible to market manipulation.**
- MMIFOR, on the other hand, incorporates the **adjusted SOFR rates, which are compounded retrospectively** for different time periods. These rates are obtained from the Bloomberg Index Services, among other components.
  - The introduction of SOFR and MMIFOR aims to provide a more reliable and transaction-based benchmark for financial contracts, reducing the risks associated with LIBOR.

## What are the Challenges in Shifting from LIBOR?

- There are many products linked to LIBOR which **had to be redesigned with an Alternate Reference Rate (ARR)** as the base.
  - Two working groups constituted by the association, receiving guidance from the RBI, helped develop the same.
- Transitioning from LIBOR to an ARR poses challenges in technology and legal aspects. These challenges involved **dealing with existing contracts, making necessary modifications with counterparties, interbank entities**, and borrowers.
- Banks need to undertake essential systemic and technical changes. These changes involve identifying products tied to **LIBOR and determining the overall exposure.** Banks also have to inform **customers about the transition, incorporate fallback clauses** in contracts to address scenarios where the reference rate is no longer available, assess the impact on their profit and loss statements, and make necessary adjustments to their technology platforms.

## Way Forward

- Banks need to continue thei**r efforts in redesigning products linked to LIBOR** with the new ARR as the basis. The two working groups constituted by the association, with guidance from the RBI, play a crucial role in developing the necessary framework for this transition.
- To overcome the challenges in technology and legal aspects, **banks must focus on handling existing contracts and making appropriate modifications** with counterparties, interbank entities, and borrowers.
- Banks need to assess the **impact on their profit and loss statements and make any required adjustments** to their technology platforms to facilitate a smooth transition.

# Advancements in Sodium-ion Batteries

## Why in News?

Recently, Indian scientists have made a significant breakthrough in the development of **Sodium-ion (Na-ion) batteries** by creating **new cathode materials that offer high performance, cost-effectiveness, and environmental stability.**

- This advancement addresses the **challenges of air/water-instability and structural-cum-electrochemical instability in Sodium-transition-metal-oxide (Na-TM-Oxide) based cathode materials,** leading to the production of stable and efficient energy storage systems.

## What are the Newly Developed Cathode Materials?

- **About:**
  - Cathode material is the **electrode where sodium ions are stored** during the **battery's discharge process.**
    - It is responsible for the **electrochemical reactions that allow** the **flow of electrical current.**
  - The newly developed cathode materials are known for **being air/water-stable and high-performance.**
    - They exhibit high **electrochemical cyclic stability and stability upon exposure to air/water.**
- **Significance:**
  - The newly developed cathode materials for Sodium-ion batteries offer **high performance, cost-effectiveness, and environmental friendliness.**
    - These materials are paving the way for the **development of efficient and sustainable energy storage systems** for various applications such as **consumer electronics, grid energy storage, renewable energy storage, and** electric vehicles.

## What is Sodium-ion (Na-ion) Battery?

- **About:**
  - A sodium-ion battery is a type of **rechargeable battery** comparable to the ubiquitous **lithium-ion battery**, but it uses **sodium ions (Na+) as the charge carriers rather than lithium ions (Li+).**
    - The working principles behind and cell construction of a sodium-ion battery is virtually identical to those of lithium-ion batteries, but sodium compounds are used instead of lithium compounds.
  - Sodium-ion batteries are currently **emerging as a potential alternative to current** lithium-ion battery technology due to their lower cost**, higher availability, and reduced impact on the environment.**
- **Importance:**
  - The growing significance of **battery-driven** electric vehicles in addressing **climate and environmental concerns** necessitates the development of cost-effective, resource-friendly, safe, and sustainable alkali metal-ion battery systems beyond **conventional Lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries.**
  - India's abundance of sodium sources makes the **Na-ion battery system particularly crucial in the local context**, offering a readily available and abundant resource for Na-ion battery production.
- **Challenges:**
  - The performance of Na-ion batteries depends on the structural and **electrochemical stability of the electrodes,** sodium-ion transport kinetics, and various dynamic resistances.

- However, the electrochemical behavior and **stability of sodium based cathode** materials needs significant improvements for widespread usage of Na-ion battery systems.

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# Axolotls and Organ Renegration

## Why in News?

The **Axolotl**, a species of **salamander( (lizard-like** amphibians**) possesses an extraordinary ability to regenerate lost body parts**, inspiring researchers to delve into the secrets of this **unique regenerative power.**

- The focus of their investigations lies in understanding the **elusive o** (for "ova deficient" **gene**, which plays a **pivotal role in the axolotl's regenerative process.**

## What is Axolotl?



- **About:**
    - **Axolotl are amphibians that spend their whole lives underwater.** They exist in the wild in only one place—**Lake Xochimilco** near **Mexico City**, a network of **artificial channels, small lakes, and temporary wetlands** that help supply water to nearby **Mexico City's 18 million residents.**
        - **Lake Xochimilco is also a** UNESCO World Heritage site
    - Axolotls, like humans, contain two copies of every gene – **one inherited from the father and the other from the mother.**
- **Prey:**
    - They feast on a **menu of mollusks, worms, insect larvae, crustaceans, and some fish.**
- **Special Feature:**
    - They have fascinated scientists for their **ability to regenerate lost body parts and for their rare trait of neoteny,** which means **they retain larval features throughout life.**
        - These features are also studied by cancer researchers for their unique **resistance to developing cancerous tissues.**

- Even though they are **amphibians, axolotls remain aquatic throughout their lives but they are now almost extinct in the wild.**
    - **Threat:**
        - Axolotl populations have declined considerably due to a **combination of habitat loss** (largely driven by Mexico City's continued urbanisation), **water pollution, and invasive fish species** (such as **carp** and **tilapia**, which **compete with axolotls for food and prey upon them).**
    - **Protection Status:**
        - **International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)** has classified the axolotl as a critically endangered **species since 2006.**

## What is Organ Regeneration?

- **About:**
    - Organ regeneration is the process of **restoring or replacing damaged or missing organs or tissues in living organisms.** It is a fascinating phenomenon that varies widely among different species, from plants to animals.
        - Organ regeneration has enormous potential for **medical applications, such as treating injuries and diseases that affect human organs.**
- **Major Processes:**
    - **Remodelling:** This involves reshaping and reorganising the existing tissues to form new structures.
        - For example, **plants and some sea creatures**, such as jellyfish, can replace missing parts by extensively **remodelling their remaining tissues.**
    - **Blastema formation:** This involves growing a mass of undifferentiated cells at the site of injury that can differentiate into various cell types and form new tissues and organs.
        - For example, some animals such as **salamanders** can regenerate missing parts by first growing a blastema.
    - **Compensatory hypertrophy:** This involves increasing the size and function of the remaining part of an organ to compensate for the loss of another part.
        - For example, in **humans if one kidney is removed from a human, the other enlarges.**
- **Other Example of Organisms that can Regenerate Organs:**
    - **Planarians, Zebrafish and** Sea cucumber.

**Source: TH**

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# Rapid Fire Current Affairs

## India's Anti-Corruption Efforts for Women's Empowerment

In the upcoming G20 **anti-corruption working group meeting in Rishikesh,** India will shed light on its experiences where anti-corruption **efforts have positively impacted** the empowerment of women**.** The meeting will cover a range of topics, including the impact of **graft on women**, the role of **audit institutions**, and the establishment of a common definition of economic offenders. India's initiative to explore the **intersection of gender sensitivity and anti-corruption strategies** will be highlighted in a separate event on the sidelines of the meeting.

India aims to deepen the commitment of **G20 nations** in **countering corruption globally and**

**preventing economic offenders from seeking refuge in countries** with lenient laws. Indian **Prime Minister's Nine Point Agenda for Action Against Fugitive Economic Offences** and **Asset Recovery**, presented during **Argentina's G20 Presidency in 2018**, resonates with the concerns of all G20 countries.

India is also compiling a compendium of good practices regarding the role of auditing in combating corruption, emphasizing **collaboration between Supreme Audit Authorities** and **anti-corruption bodies to enhance transparency and accountability in public finances.** This comprehensive approach demonstrates India's priority in strengthening the fight against corruption.
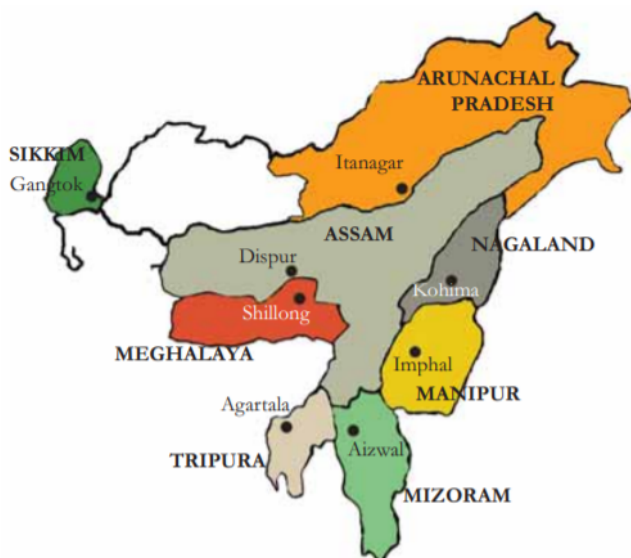
**Read more:** G-20 and Need for Multilateralism,

## Indigenous Tribes Demand Total Separation of Manipur's Hill Areas

In **Manipur**, the **Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF)** is a tribal leaders' forum in Manipur that describes itself as a **conglomerate of the recognized tribes in Manipur's Churachandpu.** It has called for the complete **separation of the hill areas,** inhabited primarily by the indigenous tribes of the **Kuki-Chin-Zomi-Mizo group**, from the rest of the state. The ITLF, representing the recognized tribes in Manipur's Churachandpur district, submitted a petition to the former CRPF chief, who was appointed as the security advisor to the **Manipur government following recent ethnic clashes**. The forum expressed their **inability to coexist with the dominant** Meiteis, accusing them of perpetrating endless atrocities and displaying hatred towards the tribal people.

**Read more:** Violence in Manipur**,** Demand of Meities for ST Status

## Efforts to Resolve Assam and Meghalaya Border Dispute



The recent chief minister-level meeting between **Assam and Meghalaya** marked a significant **step towards resolving the long-standing border disputes between the two states**. With Assam and Meghalaya sharing an **884 km-long border that has witnessed frequent flare-ups**, this meeting was the **"beginning" of the resolution process for the remaining six disputed areas.**

Since **July 2021**, they have been engaged in discussions to settle the disputes, and last March, 2022 they signed an MoU to address **six out of the twelve disputed areas.** The **six sectors where disputes** remain are Langpih, Borduar, Nongwah-Mawtamur, DeshDoomreah, Block 1 & Block II, and Psiar-Khanduli.

Additionally, the meeting decided to initiate visits to the disputed areas by three panels previously formed by both states. These **developments indicate a renewed commitment to resolve the border issues and foster peace and stability in the region.**

**Read More:** Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute

# The Changathi Project

**The accomplishment** of **[migrant workers](#)** in the Malayalam examination highlights the success of the **Changathi project under the Kerala Literacy Mission.**

Designed to address the **e**xclusion faced by migrant labourers **in society, this program aims to teach them to read and write Malayalam and Hindi.** Recognizing the importance of socio-cultural integration, the **literacy mission seeks to equip migrant workers with the necessary skills to understand the nuances of the state they reside in.** The programme was first launched on **August 15, 2017**, in **Perumbavoor, Kerala.**
Through initiatives like Changathi, **migrant workers are being empowered,** breaking down barriers and **fostering greater inclusivity in society.**

**Read More:** [Migrant Issues and Safeguards](#)